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CONTENTS

JUNE 2008

FEATURES

The Next Big Music Games 39
With the summer concert season in full swing, we rock out with Guitar Hero: On Tour and Guitar Hero: Aerosmith, Rock Band, and Samba de Amigo for Wii.

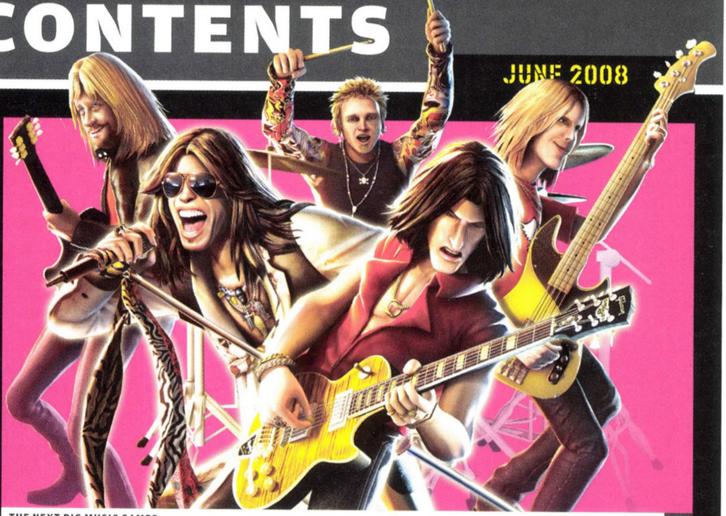
Tactical Strike 54
Square Enix's critically acclaimed strategy series takes a turn on DS with Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift.

New Tree, Old Thrills 60
Delve into our deep labyrinth of knowledge of Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard, the sequel to the cult-hit DS RPG.

Healthy Living Through Gaming 64
Our Steve Thomason dares to leave his couch to take the Wii Fit challenge.

Doctor You 68
The fan-favorite surgical series returns to its DS roots with Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2.

In Your Face 72
EA's FaceBreaker brings the old-school Punch-Out!! flavor of boxing to Wii.



THE NEXT BIG MUSIC GAMES 39

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2: GRIMOIRE OF THE RIFT 54

ETRIAN ODYSSEY II: HEROES OF LAGAARD 60

Wii FIT 64

TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE 2 68

FACEBREAKER 72

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CONTENTS

JUNE 2008

DEPARTMENTS

Pulse 6

News 12

Wii Channels 22

Previews 26
- Alone in the Dark 27
- Arkanoid DS 35
- Bangai-O Spirits 33
- Cake Mania 2 32
- Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition 32
- Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon 31
- Gauntlet 26
- Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness 30
- Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility 30
- Line Rider 2: Unbound 36
- Mega Man Star Force 2 29
- Order Up! 34
- Space Invaders Extreme 36
- Spectrobes: Beyond the Portal 33
- Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 30
- We Love Golf! 29
- Wonder World Amusement Park 35

20 Years of Nintendo Power 76

Sweepstakes 78

Power Profiles 80

Playback 84

Reviews 85
- Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy 90
- Boom Blox 87
- Drone Tactics 87
- Iron Man (DS) 90
- Iron Man (Wii) 88
- Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles 89
- Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness 86
- Summon Night: Twin Age 88
- Super Dodgeball Brawlers 89
- Top Spin 3 (DS) 90
- Top Spin 3 (Wii) 88
- We Ski 90

Community 94

Next Month 96

MARIO SUPER SLUGGERS 14

SONIC UNLEASHED 12

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED 30

BOOM BLOX 87

GAME INDEX

Alone in the Dark (Wii)	27
Arkanoid DS (DS)	35
Bangai-O Spirits (DS)	33
Bases Loaded (VC)	25
Batman Returns (SNES)	84
Big Bang Mini (DS)	18
Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy (Wii)	90
Boom Blox (Wii)	87
Cake Mania 2 (DS)	32
Crash: Mind over Mutant (Wii)	14
Cruis'n USA (VC)	25
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition (DS)	32
Drone Tactics (DS)	87
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard (DS)	60
FaceBreaker (Wii)	72
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon (Wii)	31
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift (DS)	54
From the Abyss (DS)	16
Gauntlet (DS)	26
Gravitronix (WW)	24
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith (Wii)	44
Guitar Hero: On Tour (DS)	40
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness (DS)	30
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility (Wii)	30
Iron Man (DS)	90
Iron Man (Wii)	88
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles (DS)	89
King's Knight (VC)	25
Legend of Spyro, The: Dawn of the Dragon (Wii, DS)	16
Line Rider 2: Unbound (Wii, DS)	36
LostWinds (WW)	22
Mario Super Sluggers (Wii)	14
Mega Man Star Force 2 (DS)	29
MySims Kingdom (Wii, DS)	13
Order Up! (Wii)	34
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness (DS)	86
Pop (WW)	23
Potpourrii (WW)	24
Powerball (VC)	25
Rock Band (Wii)	46
Sam & Max Season One (Wii)	14
Samba de Amigo (Wii)	50
Sonic Unleashed (Wii)	10
Space Invaders Extreme (DS)	36
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals (DS)	33
Spelunker (VC)	25
Star Soldier R (WW)	23
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed (Wii, DS)	28
Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People (WW)	24
Summon Night: Twin Age (DS)	88
Super Dodgeball Brawlers (DS)	89
Super R-Type (VC)	25
Time Hollow (DS)	13
Top Spin 3 (DS)	90
Top Spin 3 (Wii)	88
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2 (DS)	68
Valkyrie Profile (DS)	18
We Love Golf! Wii)	29
We Ski (Wii)	90
Wii Fit (Wii)	64
Wonder Boy (VC)	25
Wonder World Amusement Park (Wii)	35
Yoshi's Cookie (VC)	25
Zubo (DS)	16

DS = NINTENDO DS
SNES = SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

NEWS	🟥
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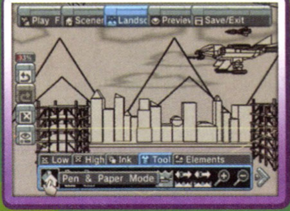
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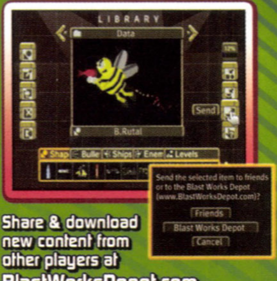
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Pulse

Playing in Perfect Harmony

You don't have to be a hardcore gamer to know that music games have shot up the charts in recent years. While cult hits like PaRappa the Rapper brought rhythm to gaming over a decade ago, Dance Dance Revolution, Guitar Hero, and Rock Band have taken the genre to superstardom. By playing a plastic guitar, dancing on a mat, or simply tapping a button, music games allow everyone to interact with music. And just as the joy of music is universal, so are these games, appealing to both new and longtime players.

That's what I find most appealing about these games—that my nongamer friends and family will join in on the fun. I regularly get letters from a very vocal minority who only want to see games made for die-hard fans, who see the widening appeal of crossover titles like Wii Sports and Guitar Hero as some kind of threat. I say, as long as the games are fun, the more the merrier.

It's going to be a monster year for music games, with even more hot titles on the way—but we've been sworn to secrecy about those for now. Turn over to page 39 and get ready to rock!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

[LETTERS]

Yeeeeeah! Letter time! Before we kick things off, I've got a new topic request: what are your favorite and least favorite Mario games, and why? Let me know at pulse@futureus.com, or at the address on page 8. Now to this month's letters! (I sure hope that somebody wrote in about puppets!)

ZELDA PUPPETS

Has anyone at NP seen *The Dark Crystal*? It's a fantasy film by Jim Henson in which all of the characters are highly detailed puppets. I wonder if this same style could be used in a Zelda movie? It would hold true to the fantasy world of Zelda, yet bring it to life.

JON H.

Interesting idea, Jon! But while I enjoyed The Dark Crystal *[see the above photo] as a kid, today I think much more could be done with computer graphics.*

IN DEFENSE OF SONIC

After reading Wamoo's negative comments about Sonic in V. 228, I couldn't help but think that I've heard statements like his before. Oh, right—from the mouths of reviewers at other video game magazines who refuse to judge a Sonic game by its own merits instead of comparing it to the series' original titles.

(NO NAME GIVEN)

Everybody knows that Sonic was once an enemy of Nintendo, but people who still hold a grudge against him are like the guy who killed Lincoln because he couldn't get over the fact that the Union won the Civil War.

LEGENDARYYOSHI

The message from Sonic fans is clear: hedgehog haters and presidential assassins are not to be tolerated. You've been warned!

HOMUNCULUIGI

I made Luigi with clay. It's standing up by itself—no supports!

(NO NAME GIVEN)

I...I can't look away....

DUDE, WHERE'S MY Wii?

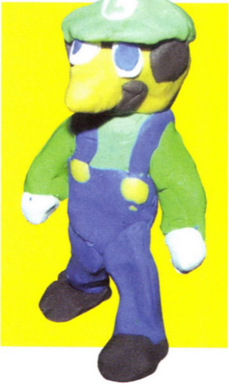
While I've played video games since the NES days, my girlfriend Krystel was a casual gamer at best...until Wii came along. Now, thanks to Twilight Princess, Super Paper Mario, and Wii Play, she wants the Wii all to herself.

It took me months to find the first Wii, so finding a second one seems almost impossible. Buying another system would be a waste anyway, since we are moving in together next year. So, for a long time I was forced to pack up my Wii and move it from house to house every single week. It's very inconvenient, especially when I get those midnight urges to bust some Koopas while the console is miles away.

Now I've given up completely and my Wii has been living with Krystel for about a month. I want it back, but I don't want to discourage her from playing games since I'd rather we do that together than girly things like shopping. What would you guys do?

ERKAN ALI

Erkan, hand the magazine to your girlfriend. Krystel? Erkan needs his Wii back. He really likes you, but a cool, complicated man like him needs to be able to bust Koopas at a moment's notice. C'mon; you knew what you were getting into when you fell for his bad-boy ways. In return, he'll take you shopping all weekend—his treat!



It has two eyes, four limbs, and a mustache, but HomuncuLuigi needs *your soul*....

GOT MILK?

Hey, Nintendo Power, I got this cool Link cake for my birthday!

ANNIE

Here is a picture of a Mario 1-Up cake that some friends and I made for a very special birthday party.

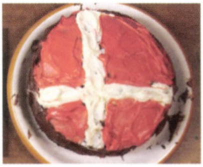
HANNAH H.

My son turned six this weekend and we threw him a Mario party! He helped plan this cake [shown below] and I made it for him. We had to make sure that no one accidentally ate the Mario and Luigi figures. Long live the plumbers!

KELLY P.

Check out this Super Smash cake of a bumper I made in creative foods class. It's a tribute to one of the greatest video game franchises ever created!

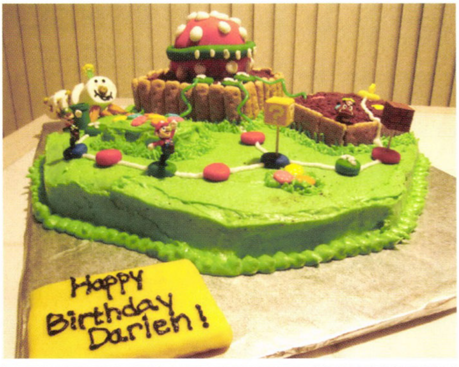
TAYKO



On March 25th my dad turned 60 years old, and all he wanted for his birthday was a Wii. The console is still very hard to find in stores near where I live, but we managed to get one! My co-worker Missy makes cakes as a hobby, and she agreed to create a Wii cake for my dad. It was a huge success! (At first we told him that it was the only Wii we could find.) I'd like to thank Nintendo for making an awesome system that everyone can play.

CASEY

On my last birthday, I got a cookie. A single, crummy cookie. I hate all of you with every fiber of my cake-deprived being. Oh, and happy belated birthdays!



I've finally seen a cake so amazing that I couldn't eat it. I'd wolf down the Mona Lisa if it were covered in icing, but this work of art? Never.

GameCube gave us classics like Super Smash Bros. Melee, Animal Crossing, Pikmin 1 & 2, Luigi's Mansion, The Wind Waker, Super Mario Sunshine, Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door, and more. But still, people tell me that the system is a joke. In V. 227, even your editor in chief called it Nintendo's least successful console. In terms of profit, maybe, but that's not the only way to judge a system.

K.W.F

That's a great point, K.W.F. While the GameCube never gained the popularity that many of us had hoped for, the console was still home to many must-have games. To any Wii owners who missed out on the GameCube: pick these titles up while you can!

SPEED BRAWLING

Here's how to get every character in Super Smash Bros. Brawl in under 1 1/2 hours: First, enter the Special Brawl rules screen and turn on Flowers and Stamina. Then, start a two-player match and set the CPU's HP to 1. Finally, start the fight—it will end right after it starts. Press Start between bouts, and new characters will challenge you every 50 or 100 brawls. Set Stage Select to Random to make things go even faster.

JASON

Awesome tip, Jason! Of course, this method is pretty darn boring, but it works great if you really want a certain character for multiplayer.

FALCON PUUUUUNCH!

In V. 226, somebody named Charlie suggested a Wii-themed soda. I think it would be great if Nintendo made a Super Smash Bros. energy drink to fuel those late-night gaming sessions. It would come in just one flavor: Falcon Punch.

ETHAN M.

That is both the worst pun and the best idea that I've ever heard.

GOING HOLLYWOOD

I have a great idea: a game that uses Nintendo's all-stars to spoof famous movies. Can you imagine flicks like *Alien* or *Titanic* starring characters like Samus or Mario? I can see it now: after refusing to pay off Bowser's cronies, Luigi wakes up to find Yoshi's head in his bed à la *The Godfather*. Sounds awesome, right guys? Guys...?

(NO NAME GIVEN)

Sounds good to us, as long as Krystal, Candy Kong, and the dog from Duck Hunt never make it off the Titanic, and Slippy plays Fredo.

Let me start by saying that I love Nintendo Power! Every issue keeps getting better. Thank you for a great magazine! I have a question: now that Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario Kart Wii have taken the world by storm, what games are you looking forward to in the coming months?

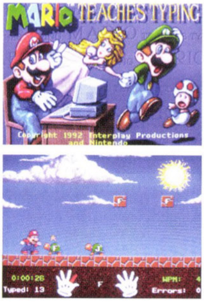
RUSS

Well, Russ, that's the big question, isn't it? With the exception of the recently announced Mario Super Sluggers, Nintendo has kept the rest of its 2008 lineup a closely guarded secret. In fact, Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime has said that we'll have to wait until this year's E3 expo (July 15-17) to find out what's in store. We know of a few big third-party titles already, but unfortunately we're sworn to secrecy. We'll be able to fill you in on one of those games next month, though—and it's a shocker!

I'M LEARNING! NOOOOO!

I recently came across a PC game called Mario Teaches Typing. Please tell me that Nintendo never thought of going into educational games—little kids shouldn't be tricked into learning like that!

DEVON T.



The game—and its sequel—were made by Interplay with Nintendo's blessing. And what's wrong with tricking kids into learning? If Daniel-san hadn't done Mr. Miyagi's chores for a few weeks, he would've never learned karate. Tricky learning is the best learning!

MORE FOR Mii

You know what would be awesome? If the Wii Shop channel offered new Mii features! There could be mohawks or different smiles and stuff. It would be a great way to spend those extra few points that are left over after buying a game.

ANDREW K

It would be cool if every time you played a new game on Wii, it would add a new accessory to the Mii Channel. For example, The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess could have included Link's green tunic, and Metroid Prime 3: Corruption could've offered a Mii version of Samus's armor.

JP

I love those ideas! However, I'm not sure that it would be technically possible to add items like those to the Mii Channel even if Nintendo wanted to. But if you could, I'd love to deck out my Mii with Mario's hat...or maybe just his mustache. Man, what my Mii couldn't get done with a 'stache like that!

HOW IS MARIO COOL?

If Mario wasn't a classic Nintendo icon, I don't think he would be popular today. Imagine if, in today's gaming world, someone introduced a chubby Russian gardener who rescued a Princess over and over—it just wouldn't fit with today's gaming. But because Mario was established early on in the video game industry, he's supposed to be cool somehow. His games are fun, don't get me wrong, but I seriously want to hear the opinion of a big Mario fan: what makes him cool?

(NO NAME GIVEN)

Hey, standing next to Luigi, anyone looks cool. Zing! I'm only kidding, Luigi fans. The answer is simple: Mario is cool because his games are some of the best ever made; it doesn't matter if he's kind of goofy.

A SMASHING SUCCESS

At my local game store's midnight Smash party, I dressed as Pit (Super Smash Bros. Brawl style) to enter a cosplay contest. Before the judging began, someone recommended sending a photo of myself as Pit to Nintendo Power, so here it is. By the way, I won the contest. Everyone at the store (including the staff) loved my costume.

CHIBI PIT

Well done! I'm always amazed at the detail that dedicated fans put into their costumes. I can barely match my shirt to my pants.

SWEATY PALMS

Whenever I'm playing an über-mega-ultra-super-intense Brawl match against my big brother, my hands start sweating! Does this ever happen to you guys?

PJ

Only to Chris Hoffman, and only when he's playing Bratz Ponyz. You don't want to touch his DS after he's spent an hour preparing for the Ponyz Town Beauty Pageant—it's like we fished it out of the bay!

CORRECTION In V. 228 we reported that Boom Blox would include a head-tracking feature. Unfortunately, we have since learned that the option is no longer planned for the game.

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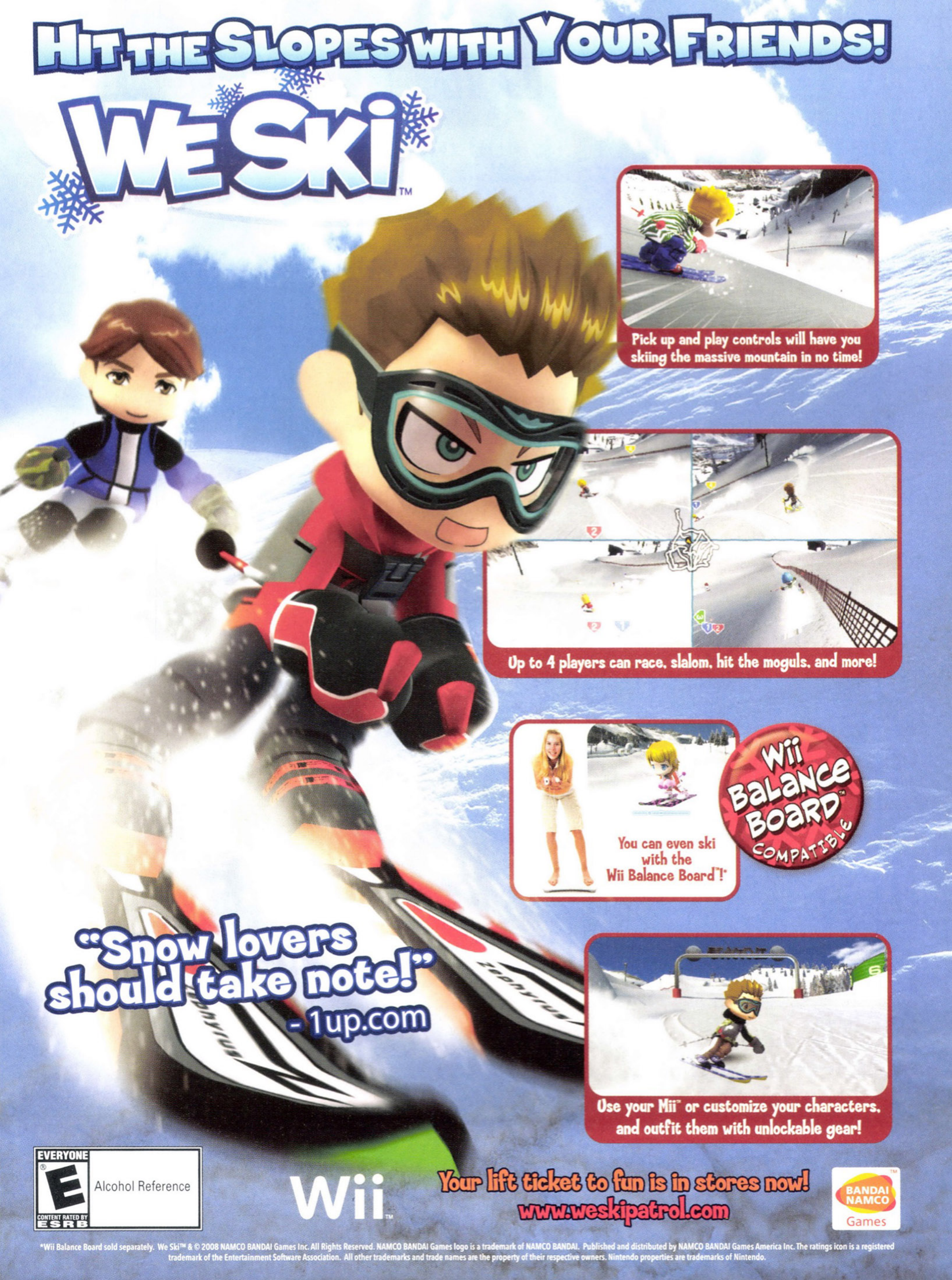

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ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?

9 out of 10 – Official Xbox Magazine, June 2008

*actual in-game screenshots

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NINTENDO DS

Wii

PAM

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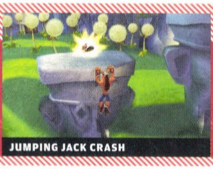
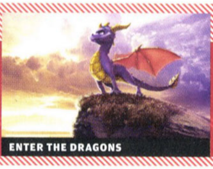
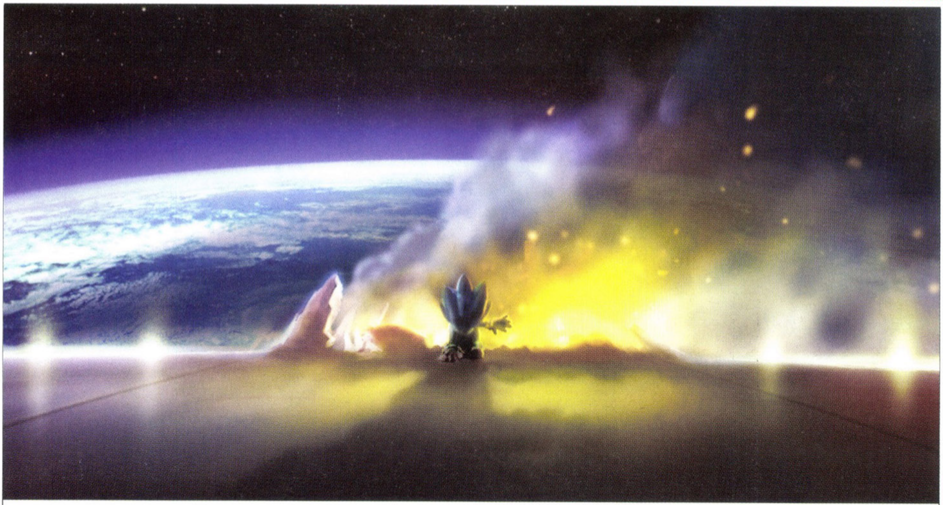


JUMPING JACK CRASH



ENTER THE DRAGONS



Return to Form

The blue blur looks to get back to his roots with Sonic Unleashed for Wii. Color us excited.

Sonic the Hedgehog has had a long and...complicated...history. While the spiny one's original side-scrollers for the Sega Genesis are almost universally lauded as all-time classics, his more-recent adventures in 3-D have been met with decidedly mixed opinions. So when Sega reveals that the next installment in the long-running series—Sonic Unleashed—will focus primarily on 2-D gameplay, it's cause for excitement. The camera will pan behind the hedgehog (à la Sonic and the Secret Rings) on occasion, but most of the time we'll be kicking it old-school with the blue blur.

Slated for a Wii release this holiday season, Sonic Unleashed begins catastrophically, with longtime nemesis Dr. Robotnik (we refuse to call him Eggman) breaking the world apart into seven pieces. Naturally, it's up to our fleet-footed hero to put things back together. To accomplish this task, Sonic will be able to utilize a host of new speed mechanics, as well as an all-new combat engine. Sega also promises—rather cryptically—that the adventure will undergo a dramatic transformation as day turns to night.

Though screens and even a short teaser trailer have been shown for the PlayStation 3/Xbox 360 version of the game, Sega's not ready to show the Wii version quite yet. The publisher tells us to expect significant differences, however. "First, the gameplay will be changed, tuned, and balanced specifically for the Wii," says Patrick Riley, the game's producer at Sega of America. "Secondly, the levels will be different, designed specifically for the Wii version." To facilitate these unique aspects, Sega has assigned a separate development team to work solely on the Wii game. "Fans who like to see Sonic on Nintendo platforms will be excited to know that the team who developed Sonic Rush and Sonic Rush Adventure has played an integral role in creating the Wii version [of Sonic Unleashed,]" says Riley. Excellent news.

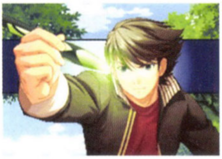
Between this and BioWare's Sonic Chronicles for DS, 2008 could very well be the year of the hedgehog. Rest assured that we're keeping a close eye on Sonic Unleashed, and we hope to have first Wii screens and impressions very soon. —STEVE T.

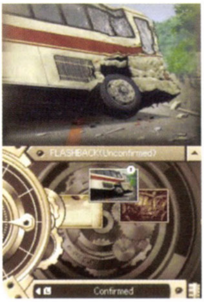
The Pen Is Mightier

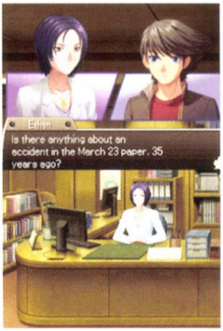
Konami's mysterious **Time Hollow** for DS allows you to use the power of the Hollow Pen to change the past and influence the present.

Almost everybody has regrets about the past. But only Ethan Kairos, the star of Konami's story-driven DS graphic adventure Time Hollow, has the power to do something about it. Although Ethan seems like a typical high-school student living a normal life, on the morning of his 17th birthday he wakes up to discover that everything has changed. His parents are gone—apparently deceased for 12 years—and his life is completely different from the one he knew. As he tries to comprehend what's happened, he acquires the mystical Hollow Pen (it looks a lot like a DS stylus), which gives him the ability to "dig holes" into the past. By using the pen, Ethan is able to manipulate past events and change his present, thus slowly unraveling the mystery around his altered reality and bringing him closer to reuniting with his family.

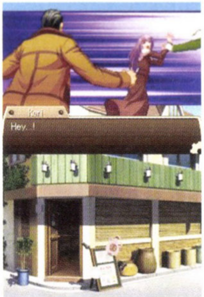
While the puzzle-oriented point-and-click gameplay appears very promising, the storytelling and presentation should also be highlights: Time Hollow is cowritten by Junko Kawano (who previously explored intriguing time-travel themes in the underappreciated PlayStation 2 game Shadow of Destiny) and features numerous fully animated cut-scenes by acclaimed studio AIC, which has been involved with anime series such as *Gun X Sword* and *Ah! My Goddess*. Konami is expected to announce Time Hollow for an August release in North America. —CHRIS H.



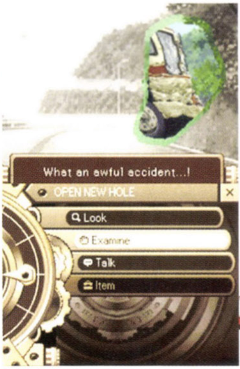


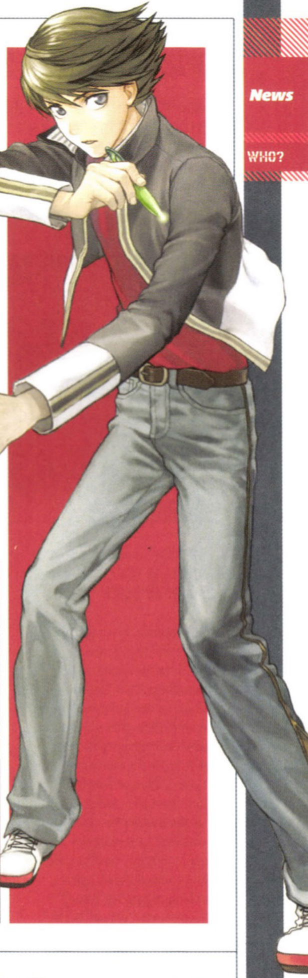


Is there anything about an accident in the March 23 paper, 35 years ago?



Hey..!

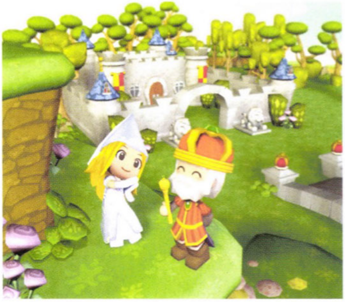

What an awful accident...!



MySims Gets Medieval

Going from a small-town renovation to a royal, multiland makeover, EA's MySims follow-up on Wii and DS proves to be a kingdom-maker.

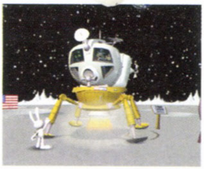
Three million players have made MySims a huge hit, giving EA reason to widen its scope for the sequel. MySims Kingdom, due this fall, will allow players to travel to several themed lands in an effort to help King Roland revitalize his kingdom. The company promises more interaction between characters and more goal-driven gameplay than in the original, which translates to a lot more things to do. In the first title, exterior construction was limited to creating buildings. In Kingdom, projects will extend to bridges, fences, windmills, and other outdoor objects. The Wii version will have the same point, click, and stack building interface as the original title. It will also use the Wii remote's unique capabilities for motion-based activities such as chopping down trees and mining for gold. With any luck, new character accessories will include jester hats and shining armor. —GEORGE S.



Play It Again, Sam (& Max)

Now Wii owners can enjoy the wacky adventures of a dog and a rabbit with the first season of **Sam & Max**.

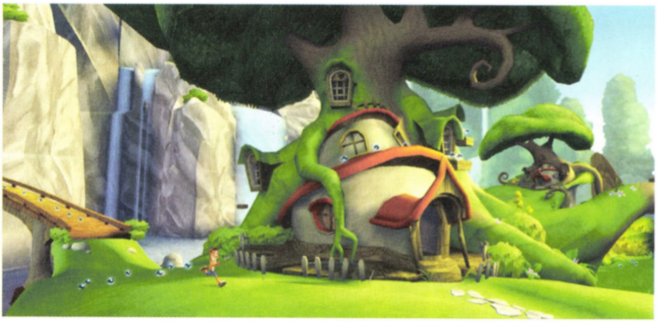
Comic-book creator Steve Purcell's Sam & Max franchise is a favorite with adventure-game junkies, due in no small part to LucasArts's Sam & Max Hit the Road for PC. That game was released in 1993, however, and gamers have had to do without the zany duo until developer Telltale Games (founded by ex-LucasArts employees who worked on the canceled sequel to Hit the Road) picked up the slack and released episodic Sam & Max adventures for PC last year. Now the first season—composed of six episodes (i.e., games)—is coming to Wii, thanks to Telltale, publisher The Adventure Company, and you. Yes, fans sent many an email asking for a Wii version of Sam & Max. The powers that be paid attention, and now the game is coming this fall, proving that you *can* make a difference. —JUSTIN C.



Big Red Machine

Gaming's bambino steps up to the plate in **Mario Super Sluggers** for Wii.

At Nintendo's recent media summit in San Francisco, the company announced that Mario Super Sluggers would be headed to North America later this year. As with the mustachioed one's first trip to the diamond—Mario Superstar Baseball for GameCube—Super Sluggers will offer a distinctly arcade-style take on the great American pastime, with Namco Bandai once again contributing to the game's development. Players will hit and pitch using the expected motion controls, and Nintendo hopes to make it approachable to gamers of all skill levels. Further specifics remain under wraps, but watch for the full scouting report in a future issue. —STEVE T.



Crash Goes Mental

In **Crash: Mind over Mutant**, you'll thwart Cortex's mind-controlling mojo by once again jacking into your enemies' abilities.

Last year's Crash of the Titans from Sierra introduced a new gameplay direction for everyone's favorite bandicoot by giving him the ability to hijack enemies and use their strength to proceed through the game. The sequel, Crash: Mind over Mutant (coming to Wii as well as DS this October), takes the concept to the next level. The Wii game features more of almost everything—more platforming, more puzzles, and especially more you can do with the jacking mechanic. Jacked enemies now level up as you use them, and instead of giving up your monster when you need to switch to a different one, you can store one with you for later use. The jacked creatures also have a greater assortment of abilities that affect the environment, such as a time-slowing skill and a water-freezing skill—ideal for exploring the game's vast, interconnected world. The action is tied to a plot in which Crash's nemesis, Neo Cortex, is taking over mutants' minds with a cell-phone-like device. —CHRIS H.

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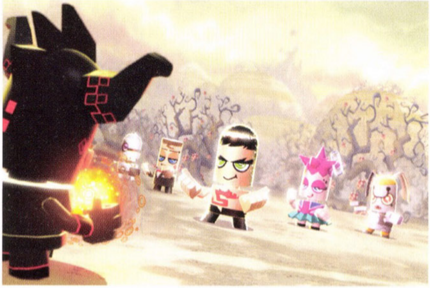


Z is for Zubo

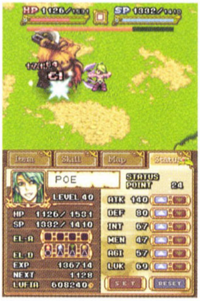
Cute, playful, and ready to give opponents a rhythm-based beatdown, the stars of EA's new adventure **Zubo** may not be just for kids.

A quick glance at the just-announced Zubo's character design might conjure images of Fisher-Price toys, but music-matching gameplay, more than 100 fighting moves, and a sophisticated graphics engine are likely to attract those who are past the building-block age. Players befriend and build teams of Zubos in an adventure that includes skirmishes in a haunted house, on a pirate ship, and on a flight to the moon. The 55 Zubos belong to three classes: Fighters, Defenders, and Performers. Class accounts for three of a Zubo's four moves. A Defender, for example, executes actions that shield it or stun its opponents. The last move is unique to each Zubo type. Says producer Michael Heywood, "Some can hulk out into Evo Zubos to do massive damage. Some use gadgets or tools, and others use abilities which we can't reveal yet. But take our word for it—they are really fun!" —GEORGE S.

The Hole Truth

Aksys Games brings you **From the Abyss**, an action-oriented DS RPG that digs you into a new hole every time you start the adventure.

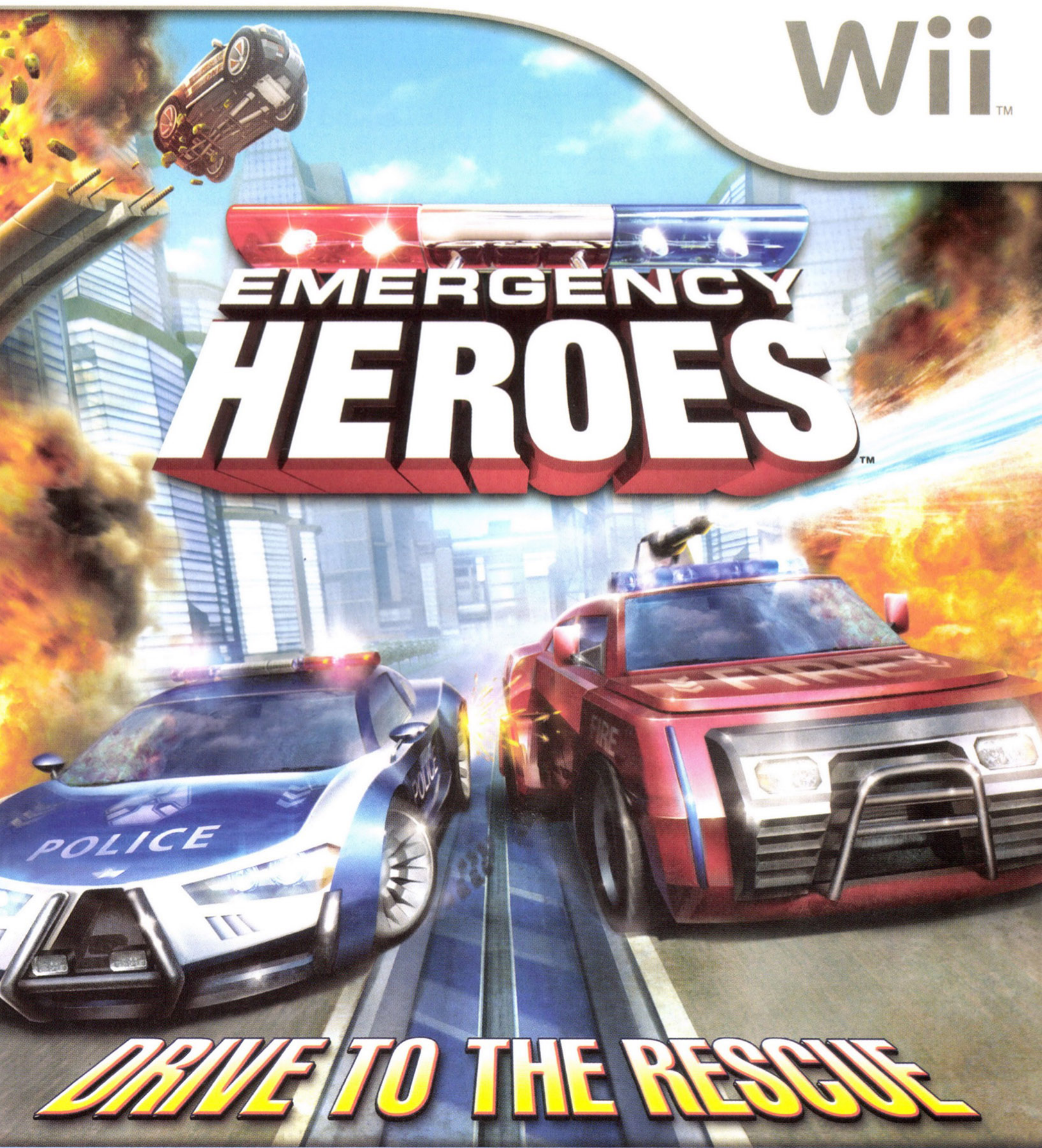
From the Abyss randomly generates its world, Rubenhaut, whenever you initialize the game, giving you a fresh start if you decide to play through the adventure multiple times. Going with RPG tradition, Japanese developer Sonic Powered has made your characters' attributes variable, too. The distribution of skill points puts characters on the path of a heavy-hitting bruiser, a wily magician, or a balanced fighter. Another factor that will help your team is the ability to capture opponents' souls and use their skills in battle. The game's main action takes place on the top screen while the bottom screen displays a map and information about your battlers. If you don't want to venture into the darkness alone, you can team up with another player for cooperative adventuring via a local wireless connection. Look for the game to emerge by the end of the year. —GEORGE S.



Double Dragons

Sierra's diminutive purple dragon is back—and this time he's brought a friend—in **The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon**.

The saga that began with The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning on GameCube will come to its dramatic conclusion this October when The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon arrives on Wii courtesy of Sierra. Developed by French studio Etranges Libellules, Dawn of the Dragon picks up three years after the previous Spyro game. During that time, the Dark Master, Malafor, has been wreaking havoc on the world, and it's up to Spyro to stop him. Luckily, Spyro isn't alone; female black dragon Cynder is now a playable character, and she has unique powers (she controls the forces of wind, poison, shadow, and fear). You can swap between the dragons at will, or team up with a friend to play the game cooperatively. Spyro also has an important new ability: he can fly at any time. As with previous Spyro games, the voice talent is top-notch; Elijah Wood returns as Spyro, Christina Ricci takes the role of Cynder, and Mark Hamill plays Malafor. A DS version from Tantalus Interactive is also in the works. —CHRIS H.



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GAME WATCH FORECAST

Looking at this list, we'd say there are some cool games coming out this year. And these are just the games we know about! We should hear more announcements in the coming months.

Wii

Active Life: Outdoor Challenge	Namco Bandai	7/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	6/08
BlastWorks: Build, Trade, Destroy	Majesco	5/08
Boom Blox	Electronic Arts	5/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	6/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Cooking Mama Cook Off 2	Majesco	6/08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
de Blob	THQ	6/08
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	Eidos	5/08
Deca Sports	Hudson	SUM 08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	5/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	5/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Emergency Heroes	Ubisoft	5/08
FaceBreaker	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	Square Enix	7/08
Ford Racing Off Road	Empire Interactive	6/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	Activision	6/08
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	Natsume	7/08
Heavenly Guardian	UFO Interactive	TBA
The Incredible Hulk	Sega	6/08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Kung Fu Panda	Activision	5/08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	LucasArts	6/08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Mario Super Sluggers	Nintendo	TBA
Monster Lab	Eidos	5/08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	FALL 08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
NCAA Football 09	EA Sports	7/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Order Up!	Zoo	7/08
Rock Band	MTV Games	6/08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	6/08
Sam & Max Season One	The Adventure Company	FALL 08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	SPR 08
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Sonic Unleashed	Sega	Q4 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	6/08
Top Spin 3	2K Sports	Q3 08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Wacky Races	Eidos	6/08
WALL*E	THQ	6/08
We Cheer	Namco Bandai	FALL 08
We Love Golf!	Capcom	6/08
We Ski	Namco Bandai	5/08
Wii Fit	Nintendo	5/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	6/08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08

NINTENDO DS

1 vs. 100	DSI Games	5/08
Arkanoid DS	Square Enix	6/08
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	Q2 08
Big Bang Mini	SouthPeak	FALL 08
Bleach: Dark Souls	Sega	SUM 08
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	2008
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	Q3 08
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	9/08
Cake Mania 2	Majesco	6/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Commando: Steel Disaster	XS Games	5/08
Construction Combat: Lock's Quest	THQ	FALL 08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
Crosswords DS	Nintendo	5/08
de Blob	THQ	2008
Dinosaur King	Sega	8/08
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Disgaea DS	NIS America	7/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	5/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition	THQ	FALL 08
Drone Tactics	Atlus	5/08
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	Atlus	6/08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	7/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	6/08
From the Abyss	Aksys	2008
Garfield Fun Fest	DSI Games	5/08
Gauntlet	Eidos	6/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
GRID	Codemasters	Q2 08
Guitar Hero: On Tour	Activision	SUM 08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	6/08
The Incredible Hulk	Sega	6/08
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	Aksys	5/08
Kung Fu Panda	Activision	5/08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	LucasArts	6/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
LOL	Agetec	5/08
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Concerto	Eidos	6/08
Mega Man Star Force 2: Zerker X Ninja	Capcom	6/08
Mega Man Star Force 2: Zerker X Saurian	Capcom	6/08
Metal Slug 7	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Mister Slime	Southpeak	5/08
Moon	Mastiff	Q4 08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	Q2 08
My Weight Loss Coach	Ubisoft	Q3 08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	Majesco	SUM 08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
New International Track & Field	Konami	2008
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	Q3 08
Organize It	Summitsoft	5/08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	6/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	TBA
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	4/08
Professor Branium	Destineer	Q3 08
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3PA	Q2 08
Robocalypse	Vogster	SPR 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Shining Stars	DSI Games	6/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	7/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Soul Bubbles	Eidos	5/08
Space Invaders Extreme	Square Enix	6/08
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	Disney Interactive	10/08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
SpongeBob SquarePants: Drawn to Life	THQ	Q3 08
Spore Creatures	Electronic Arts	9/08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Summon Night: Twin Age	Atlus	5/08
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	5/08
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	Namco Bandai	SUM 08
TrackMania DS	Focus Home Interactive	Q4 08
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	Atlus	SUM 08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Wacky Races	Eidos	6/08
WALL*E	THQ	6/08
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08
Zubo	Electronic Arts	2008

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE *TENTATIVE TITLE

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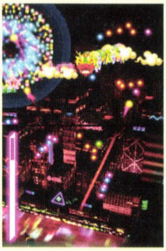
The Legend Continues

The Ocarina of Time manga is on its way.

Book and magazine publisher VIZ Media is bringing Akira Himekawa's Legend of Zelda manga to North America. Based upon Ocarina of Time on N64, the manga is split in two volumes, chronicling Link's quest to defeat Ganondorf. Both volumes are slated for an October release.



Lite Show

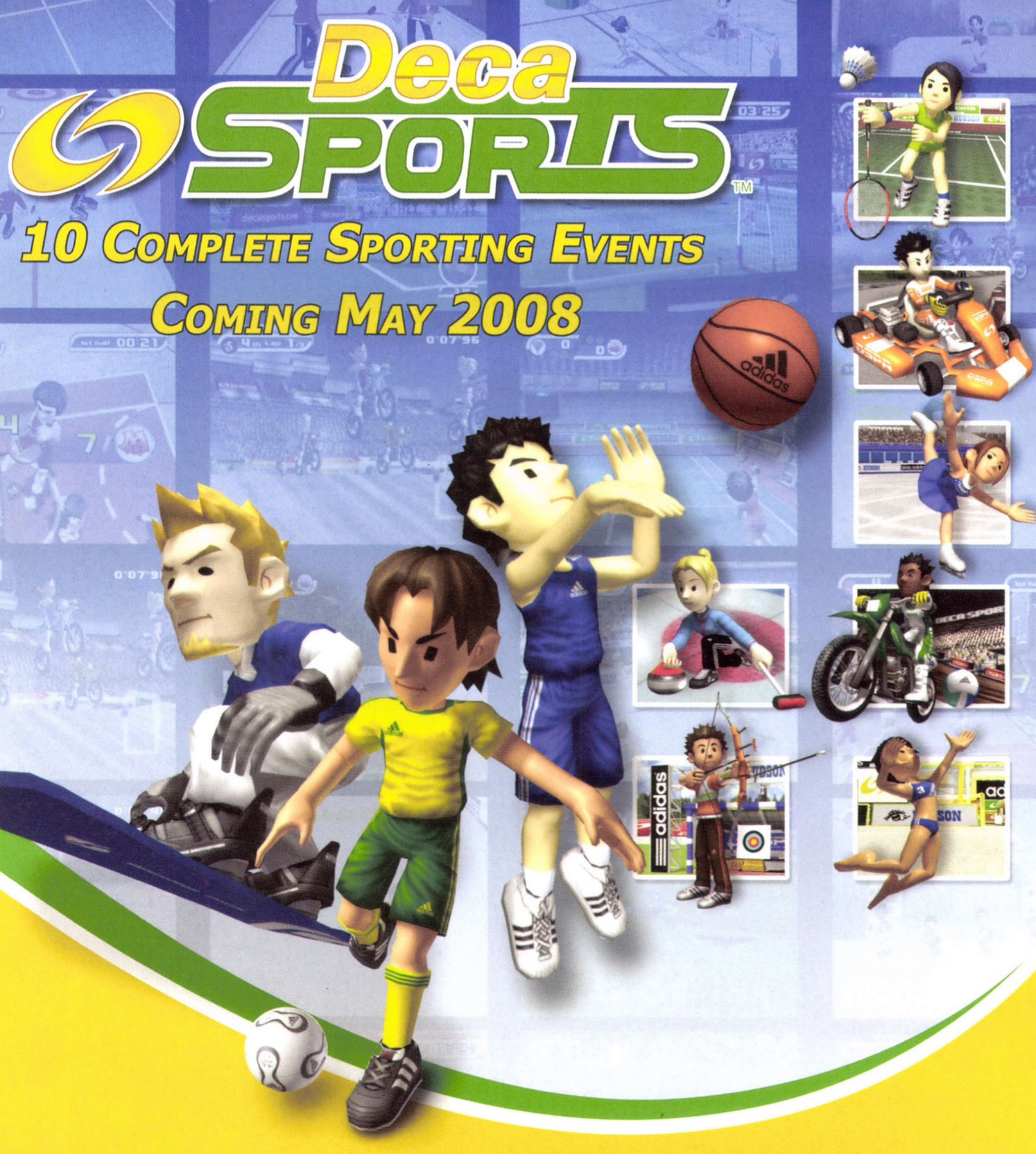
Create fireworks and save the world in Big Bang Mini for DS.

This fall, SouthPeak Interactive and developer Arkedo Studio will introduce Big Bang Mini for DS. The unorthodox shooter tasks players with creating fireworks to destroy enemies that fill the night sky. Fail, and you'll have to avoid the sparks created by your falling pyrotechnics. Succeed, and you'll have the opportunity to design your own victory celebration.

Flight of the Valkyrie

Another big-name RPG heads to the DS.

In Japan, Square Enix recently announced that an all-new installment in its Valkyrie Profile series will be coming exclusively to DS. No word yet on a US release.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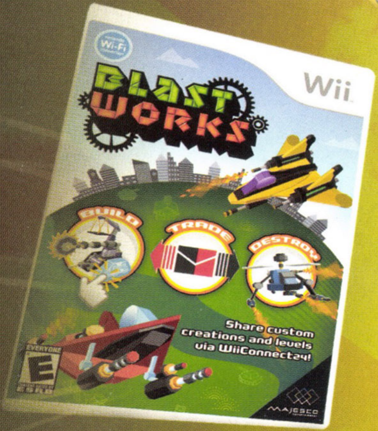
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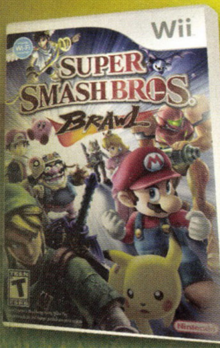
Wii
Super Smash Bros. Brawl
Nintendo

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

Original WiiWare games will be available for download in North America beginning on May 12. Get ready for all-new ways to experience Wii.

In This Section

WIIWARE
LostWinds

WIIWARE
Pop

WIIWARE
Star Soldier R

WIIWARE
Gravitronix

WIIWARE
Potpourrii

WIIWARE
Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People

INFO
Everybody Votes Channel Data

INFO
Virtual Console Poll Results

VIRTUAL CONSOLE GAMES

BASES LOADED
CRUIS'N USA
KING'S KNIGHT
POWERBALL
SPELUNKER
SUPER R-TYPE
WONDER BOY
YOSHI'S COOKIE

Winds of Change

The wind is your weapon, protector, and guide in **LostWinds**, an exciting, innovative WiiWare platformer.

One of the premiere offerings for WiiWare, LostWinds (from Frontier Developments) is a platformer with a unique hook: instead of just controlling your character directly, you also control the wind around him to help him on his journey. Technically, you're controlling two heroes—you use the nunchuk to maneuver the young, vulnerable Toku, while you use the power of a spirit named Enril to manipulate the winds via the Wii remote—as you try to stop an evil being named Balasar. The resultant adventure looks visually impressive and is packed with promising mechanics. We spoke with Frontier founder and chairman David Braben to find out more about this groundbreaking WiiWare launch title. —CHRIS H.

NINTENDO POWER
How would you summarize LostWinds?

DAVID BRABEN
LostWinds is a great-looking platform adventure that offers fresh and different gameplay by being designed specifically to take advantage of the Wii controller—it puts 'the power of the wind in the palm of your hand'!

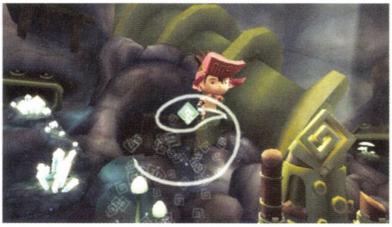
What about the game makes it ideal for WiiWare?
When Nintendo first told us about their plans for WiiWare, it seemed to be a perfect match for LostWinds. It seemed to us that they were interested in getting developers to innovate and focus on the Wii and its controller, and that's exactly what we felt we had with the LostWinds idea.

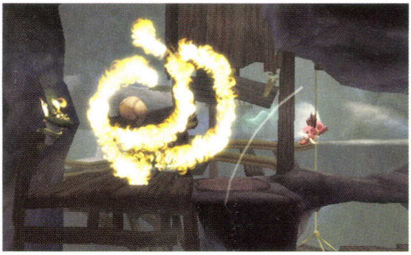
Where did the idea come from?
It was a pretty wild, miserable day outside, and Steve Burgess, one of Frontier's designers, was watching the trees and leaves being blown about through the window. He remembers thinking about how many ways the wind shapes and manipulates different things within the world...if only there was some way to become the wind in a game. He started waving his arms around, creating puzzles in his head whilst pretending to be in control of a then imaginary world. Shortly after this, the idea of a second character came. The concept of having a second vulnerable character able to be moved by the wind yet at the same time protected by it somehow felt really beautiful.

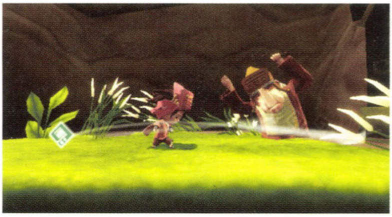
How does the game take advantage of Wii's functionality?
Focusing on a novel control mechanism has provided us with lots of new mechanics to play with: ways to get around (using Enril's powers to waft Toku through the air, of course), ways to combine natural elements of the world (such as blowing flames onto obstacles or enemies, and water onto soil to grow various seeds that Toku and Enril can use), and, of course, cool new ways to overcome enemies.

Do you gain new wind powers as the game progresses?
Yes, Enril does grow in power. As the game progresses you can make Gusts, SlipStreams and Vortices, for example, which are all useful in different ways. Toku also gets one or two items that help as well, but he still remains relatively vulnerable and needs Enril's power for his protection.

Why should people be excited about the game?
We're excited about the game because we want to play something innovative that delivers deep, involving, Wii-specific gameplay in a beautiful skin. We think we are just like any other Wii enthusiasts and owners, and so we hope others will feel the same as we do.

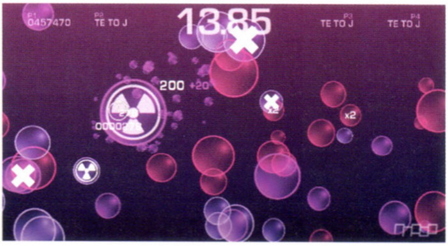




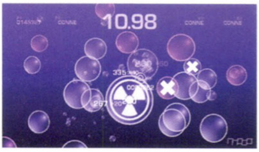


Inflationary Gaming

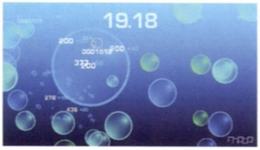
Nnooo's **Pop** starts with a simple concept—pop bubbles—and builds on it with expert techniques and a multiplayer mode that mixes competition with cooperation.



It takes approximately a nanosecond to get the gist of Pop. The screen is filled with bubbles that you pop by pointing at them with the Wii remote. A hit adds seconds to the game clock, and a missed shot knocks time off. If the clock hits zero, the game is over. By achieving consecutive hits of color-matching bubbles, you can make your score increase rapidly. Additionally, you can pump up bubbles by grabbing them and shaking them. Eventually an inflated bubble will burst, taking out the surrounding bubbles in a shockwave. Nic Watt, creative director for developer Nnooo, wanted to start with a simple game concept that any player would enjoy, then add to it. Explains Watt, "If the core aspects are fun, people will be drawn into the deeper gameplay and hopefully find something satisfying." The more practiced players are, the faster they can zip through the early levels and even skip levels entirely if they manage to score points in a hurry. Since the clock reflects how long all of the participants of a multiplayer game can go on playing, they must work together to add time to the clock, even when they're competing against one another. "For us," says Watt, "this dynamic means that the game is not locking the player into one forced style of play, which can often put people off multiplayer games, particularly if one of the players is really good at the game." Expect the bubbles to start bursting soon. —GEORGE S.



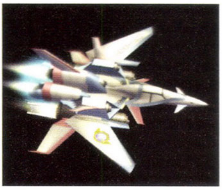
Bubbles might not seem that exciting, but they scroll past at a decent clip, which keeps the action hoppin' and poppin'.

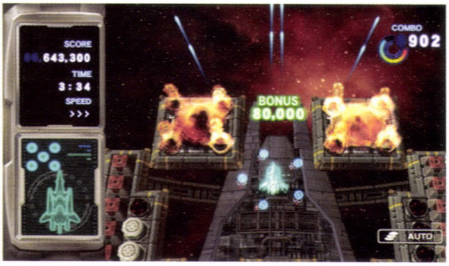


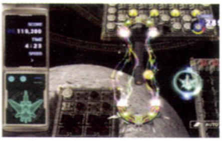
Seeing Stars

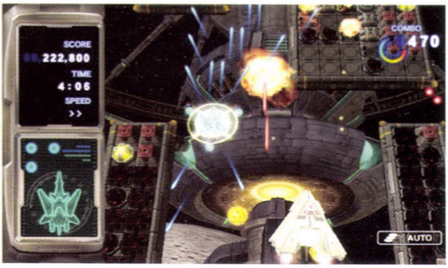
Hudson's classic **Star Soldier** series returns on WiiWare to put your trigger finger to the test.

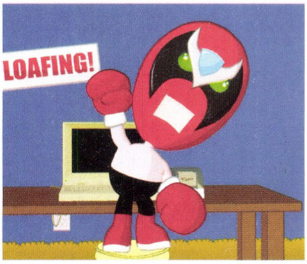
Star Soldier R is sort of the WiiWare equivalent of Red Bull—a quick hit of high-energy gameplay that will get your heart racing and your blood pumping. Designed around tournament-style action, Star Soldier R isn't a full-blown top-down shooter, but it does offer intense thrills while it lasts. You can select from either a two-minute (one level) or five-minute (two levels) challenge, with the simple goal of racking up as high a score as possible before the time limit expires. Despite the short length of a single play-through, the game has the features of a full-length shooter, including three control configurations (remote only, remote and nunchuk, and Classic controller), a wide array of enemy types, and mighty bosses such as a rotating star base and a tricky mecha-plane. Grabbing power-ups is also essential to obtaining a high score; red icons power up your weapon, yellow ones add bonus points, and blue ones activate Force satellites (which provide defense and can be sent out for extra attack power). If you're really hardcore, you can attempt Quickshot mode, where you simply mash the fire button to see how many shots you can unleash in a single second. (Legendary Hudson executive Toshiyuki Takahashi can fire 16.) Afterward, you can compare your abilities with those of others via online leaderboards. Hudson is hoping to have Star Soldier R available for download close to WiiWare's North America launch. —CHRIS H.







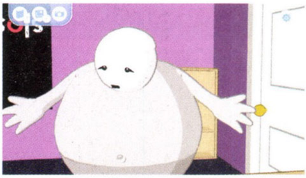




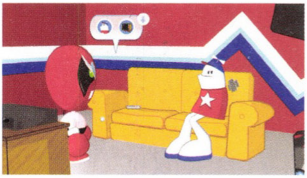
It's Good to Be Bad

That Strong Bad fella comes to WiiWare.

Strong Bad and his pals at Homestarrunner.com have been Internet fixtures since 2000, and it's about time they got a game. Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People (SBCG4AP, which isn't confusing in the slightest) is an episodic point-and-click adventure game for WiiWare that's filled with character-interacting, item-using, puzzle-solving, and email-checking. Pretty much everything Strong Bad himself would do, really. We'd expect no less from developer Telltale (the crew behind Sam & Max), which is working closely with Homestarrunner.com's creators, brothers Mike and Matt Chapman, to make each episode (read: game) as faithful to the source material as possible. Expect five episodes in SBCG4AP's first season (yes, like a TV show). —JUSTIN C.



Many if not all of your favorite characters will appear in the game, and they're voiced by the original voice actors.

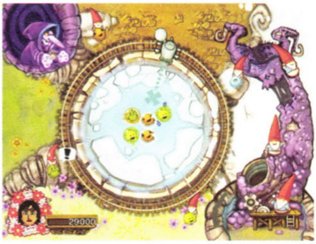


Seasonal Allegories

Puzzle pieces represent spring, summer, fall, and winter as you attempt to restore the natural order of the seasons in **Potpourrii** from Abstraction Games.

Seasoned Dutch game developers Ralph Egas and Erik Bastianen, who have collaborated on old-school-style titles for the PC, Xbox, and PSP, are taking a broad approach in finding an audience for their WiiWare debut. "Every single individual is a potential gamer," says Egas. "And I think Nintendo has already proven this philosophy works out for them pretty well." The game, Potpourrii, is designed to be simple to learn but difficult to master. The playing field is a hollow stump surrounded by the elements of the four seasons. The story is that a wizard has upset the seasonal order. You can get the seasons back on track by hitting objects that represent one season with elements that evoke the season that should follow it. To wipe out winter snow, for example, you knock it out with spring green. As elements for the offending season multiply, you earn exponentially more points for erasing them en masse.

The game employs the Wii remote's pointing function and a single button, which allows you to align yourself with one element and target another. "We afforded ourselves quite some time getting the controls right in order to meet one of our most important goals: establishing the most simple, elegant, and intuitive interface for our game mechanic," explains Bastianen. The team is hoping to release Potpourrii in time for the summer gaming season. —GEORGE S.



Attractive Proposition

Newcomer Medaverse Studios hopes that WiiWare fans will be pulled toward **Gravitronix**, a motion-controlled battler in a zero-G environment.

One of the beauties of WiiWare is that it proves that games don't have to be complex to be fun. The concept for Gravitronix reads like Pong or Breakout with multiple projectiles and lasers. Up to eight participants control Gravity Platforms by twisting a Wii remote or nunchuk to knock invading objects out of their territory and destroy enemy defenses. Jesse Lowther, president of Medaverse Studios, says that the idea for the game occupied him while he was trying to get a good night's sleep. "I kept visualizing different versions of twisting the Wii remote and objects onscreen moving when the core concept materialized," Lowther told Nintendo Power. "I pitched it at 1:00 a.m. to my lead programmer and artist. It's unusual for the two of them to like anything I pitch at first, which is good for determining whether or not an idea has merit." Lowther and team believe that novice gamers will take to the game for its simplicity, but that more-practiced players will find strategic nuance in a laser that loses power when it's overused, and four types of projectiles that vary in weight, speed, and trajectory. In addition to the multiplayer battles, a campaign mode for a single player (or a team of two) is in the works. The studio is shooting for an affordable price point and a midsummer release, but Lowther is adamant about continuing to work on the game until all parties involved are sure that players will get enough bang for their buck. "This is our first impression in the gaming industry," explains Lowther. "Needless to say, it needs to be a good one." —GEORGE S.

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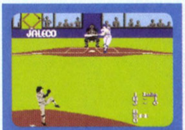
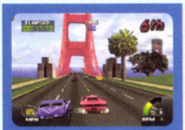


BASES LOADED

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: JALECO
GENRE: SPORTS
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1988

WHAT This 8-bit baseball game was best known for its unique behind-the-mound perspective and detailed animations.

WHY Jaleco's take on the great American pastime was definitely solid, but it trailed RBI Baseball and especially Baseball Stars in the NES standings. Plus, like most antiquated sports titles, it hasn't aged particularly well. Pass unless you're looking for a nostalgia fix. —ST

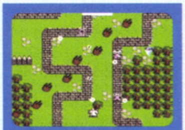


CRUIS'N USA

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 64
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: RACING
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1996

WHAT This N64 port of the popular arcade game lets you race across the USA, hitting checkpoints before time runs out.

WHY Those who grew up playing Cruis'n USA in the arcades or on the N64 might get a kick out of playing the game again, but everyone else should proceed with caution. It's definitely not a great game, but it's cheesy, and that has to count for something. —JC

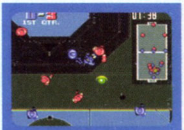


KING'S KNIGHT

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1989

WHAT Finally, a Square classic arrives on Virtual Console...but it's a shooter? Though it has mild RPG elements and a fantasy setting, King's Knight is more about twitch action than character growth.

WHY If you're looking for something different or want to see what Square was up to in its early years. The game also went nuts with destructible environments before they were the hip craze. —CH

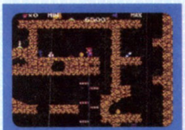


POWERBALL

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
GENRE: SPORTS
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1991

WHAT A futuristic (and ultrasimplistic) amalgamation of soccer, football, and hockey. Also, the most frustrating video game ever created.

WHY If you prefer chaos over gameplay. The Genesis had plenty of top-notch fantasy-sports titles (Mutant League Football, anyone?), but this one's squarely bush league. Your money's better spent on a Powerball ticket. —NA

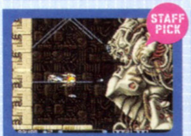


SPELUNKER

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: BRODERBUND/TOZAI
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1987

WHAT An NES port of an old Atari computer game, the platformer Spelunker has you exploring a deadly cave. And we really do mean "deadly"—nearly everything will kill you, especially falling. Seriously—you have to be careful how you step off an elevator, because you could die from the fall.

WHY If you really, really, *really* enjoy superchallenging games, then this one is for you. —JC

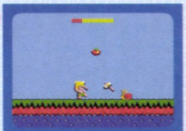


SUPER R-TYPE

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: IREM
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1991

WHAT In one of the better shooters on the SNES, you pilot the R-9 ship through seven stages of Bydo Empire ships and bosses. The game is hard—there are no midlevel checkpoints. Slowdown has never been so welcome!

WHY Although the game can be frustrating, it's extremely well designed, and it looks good, too. The soundtrack is remarkably catchy, especially in the later levels. —CH

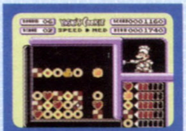


WONDER BOY

PLATFORM: MASTER SYSTEM
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: PLATFORMER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1987

WHAT The Sega Master System makes its Virtual Console debut with Wonder Boy—essentially the exact same game as tropically themed platformer Adventure Island, but with slightly spruced-up visuals and a new main character.

WHY Adventure Island is already available on Virtual Console, so the only reason to get this is if you're an Adventure Island nut or a die-hard Sega fan. —CH



YOSHI'S COOKIE

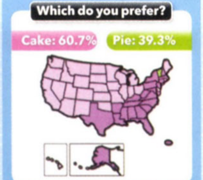
PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

WHAT In this Mario-meets-delicious-baked-goods-themed puzzle game, your goal is to match up rows and columns of cookies to clear the play field.

WHY Yoshi's Cookie isn't as intuitive as some puzzle games, but once you get the hang of it, it's pretty fun, not to mention tasty. Too bad the more-robust SNES version isn't available on Virtual Console, however. —CH

SURVEY SAYS...

Only Vermont sided with pie in the Everybody Votes Channel's all-important pie vs. cake contest. Not coincidentally, that's where NP's own Chris H. plans to move when he retires.



WANTED!

The results from our Virtual Console most-wanted poll are in, and the classic cult-hit SNES RPG Earthbound took the top spot. The moral to the story: NP readers love 16-bit RPGs.

READERS' MOST WANTED

1. Earthbound (Super NES)
2. Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)
3. Chrono Trigger (Super NES)
4. Mother (NES/Japan only)
5. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED

1. Mega Man: The Wily Wars (Sega Genesis)
2. Terranigma (Super NES)
3. Final Fantasy VI (Super NES)
4. Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)
5. Rocket Knight Adventures (Sega Genesis)

What classic games do you want to see come to Virtual Console? Send us up to five picks (only for systems currently represented on Virtual Console) at **vcpoll@futureus.com**. We'll print the results in an upcoming issue. Note: This is for polling purposes only, and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

ALONE IN THE DARK PG. 27
ARKANOID DS PG. 35
BANGAI-O SPIRITS PG. 33
CAKE MANIA 2 PG. 32
DRAWN TO LIFE: SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS EDITION PG. 32
FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO'S DUNGEON PG. 31
GAUNTLET PG. 26
HARVEST MOON: ISLAND OF HAPPINESS PG. 30
HARVEST MOON: TREE OF TRANQUILITY PG. 30
LINE RIDER 2: UNBOUND PG. 36
MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 2 PG. 29
ORDER UP! PG. 34
SPACE INVADERS EXTREME PG. 36
SPECTROBES: BEYOND THE PORTAL PG. 33
STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED PG. 30
WE LOVE GOLF! PG. 29
WONDER WORLD AMUSEMENT PARK PG. 35

Heroes of Olde

>GAUNTLET

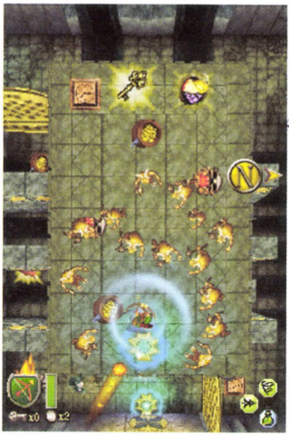
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**
DEVELOPER: **BACKBONE ENT.** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

More than 20 years ago, Atari introduced arcade players to the addictive action and adventure of Gauntlet. The game was all about multiplayer chaos in a fantasy setting; after selecting your character, you ventured forth, top-down style, to crush the enemy hordes with a combination of projectile attacks, melee blows, and screen-clearing magic spells. Fast-forward two decades, and not a lot has changed. An all-new Gauntlet is headed to the DS, and luckily for gamers, it's staying true to its roots.

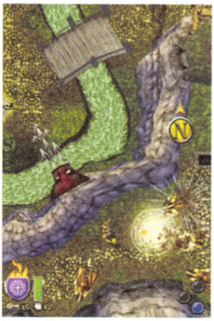
Just as in the original Gauntlet, players can select from four character types—warrior, valkyrie, elf, or wizard—each with different speed, power, defense, magic potential, and special attacks. You can also choose your character's color, including hues that weren't available in the arcade original; the pink warrior is especially chic. With your hero selected, all that's left is to jump into the fray, where you'll battle legions of enemy grunts, skeletons, goblins, and more, either taking them out from a safe distance with unlimited throwing weapons or running into them to use close-range attacks. As you navigate 40 levels spread across three realms, you'll have to destroy plentiful enemy-spawning generators and battle gargantuan bosses, including an enormous spider. By defeating foes, you'll level up to increase your stats and earn new attacks, and you'll be further aided by pick-ups such as keys, potions, and food (to restore your health).

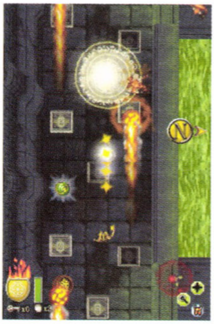
Although you can face the forces of evil solo, multiplayer action is once again at the heart of the Gauntlet experience. Up to four players can participate simultaneously, either locally or over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and you can even use the DS's microphone to talk with your friends online. And yes, the classic Gauntlet voiceovers are back, so you'll always know when the blue elf shoots the food or the red wizard's life force is running out.

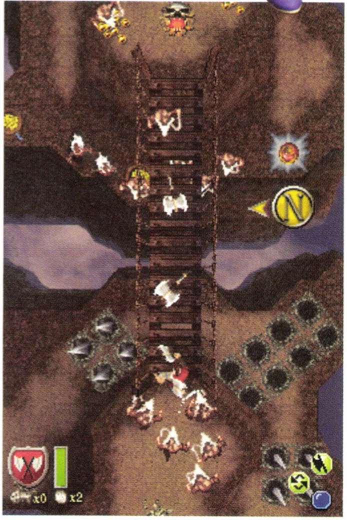
While much of the game has a glorious old-school feel, it includes a number of modern features. The graphics have been given a 3-D makeover, and the DS's dual screens let you see twice as much action at once; you'll be able to rotate the playfield so you can get an extended view in any direction. In addition, the game features three competitive multiplayer modes—deathmatch, team deathmatch, and treasure hoard—in case you'd rather beat up your buddies than team up with them. —CHRIS H.

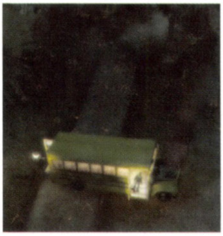


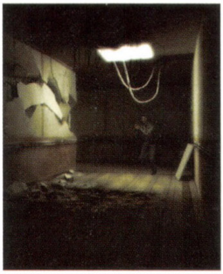
Is this what Gauntlet's classic wizard looks like behind his beard? All four character classes have been redesigned for the DS.

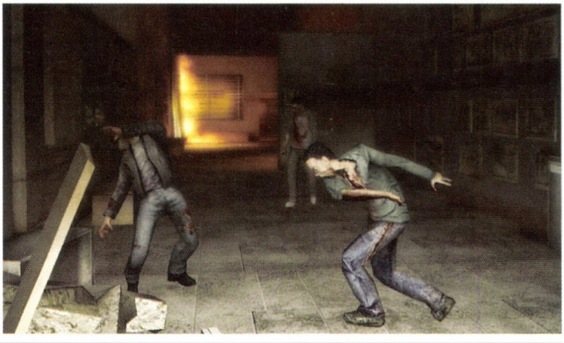












Ain't No Walk in the Park

> ALONE IN THE DARK

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **HYDRAVISION** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

The creepy haunted-house series that saw its popularity peak in the age of PC gaming is undergoing an overhaul to fit modern gaming styles—so much of an overhaul, in fact, that the fifth game in the series is titled simply Alone in the Dark, no numerals or subtitles to acknowledge the games that came before it. The key differences are the present-day setting of New York City's Central Park, a long story that can be consumed in bite-sized (and skippable) episodes, and an emphasis on action-oriented gameplay. The action focus is especially apparent in the Wii version (more so than in the versions produced for other consoles), which employs a grab bag of motion-triggered control schemes. Series star Edward Carnby (who, in a Jason Bourne-like turn, has come down with a case of amnesia) carries the entirety of his inventory in his overcoat. To open the coat and examine its contents, you make a coat-opening gesture while holding the nunchuk in your left hand and the remote in your right hand. You can also pull a gun from the coat with a right-handed cross-body move, or produce a flashlight with a similar move using your left hand. While navigating the area in third-person perspective, you can pick up items such as trash cans and swing them with a remote-slashing motion both to damage enemies and to break through obstacles. In first-person perspective, you can use the remote to aim at enemies and either fire at them with the gun or set them ablaze using an aerosol spray and a lighter. If you don't use up the spray torching bad guys, you can use it to administer first aid to the wounded hero. Considering the scrapes that Carnby can get in while rappelling down buildings, driving cars at dangerous speeds (you hold both controllers out as if you were grasping a steering wheel), and fighting off an army of infected mutants, first aid will come in handy.

In the story, Central Park is the source of an anomaly that is causing fires and ground-tearing fissures, and generating a host of animal- and human-based monsters. It begins in a building on 59th Street, where Carnby is witness to an event in the park. Before coming down to street level, he scales the building's exterior, hangs from ledges, jumps over gaps and uses gargoyles as cover from falling objects. Once inside the park, he partners up with a woman named Sarah who provides lots of colorful New Yorker dialogue. The pair's adventures include a section where they must hotwire a car (you turn the controllers to match wires) and use it to jump over one of the park's ever-widening holes. They continue on to locations both fictional and real, such as the American Museum of Natural History. The adventure begins in early June. —GEORGE S.

Take a Walk on the Dark Side

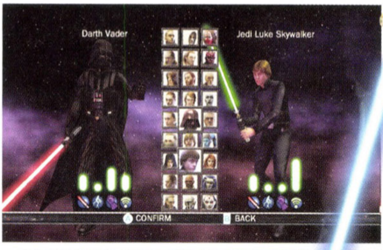
> STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

PLATFORM: **Wii, DS** • PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **KROME (Wii), N-SPACE (DS)**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

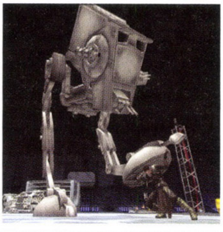
"If you only knew the power of the dark side," Darth Vader said to Luke Skywalker in *The Empire Strikes Back*. You can find out for yourself just how powerful the dark side is in LucasArts's Star Wars: The Force Unleashed. As Darth Vader's Secret Apprentice, you've got an arsenal of Force powers on hand to dispose of Rebels and Imperials alike. (You've got to remain, well, secret from anyone other than your master, your ship's pilot, and your droid, so that means leaving no witnesses.) In the Wii version, you flick the nunchuk forward to perform a Force Push, sending any objects in front of you flying. Hold Z to levitate, say, a huge rock with the Force, then push the Control Stick toward your target and release Z to chuck the rock like a missile. If you pick up a blaster turret with the Force, it will follow you around, shooting all nearby enemies until it runs out of ammo. To use your Force Lightning like Emperor Palpatine, press the C Button.

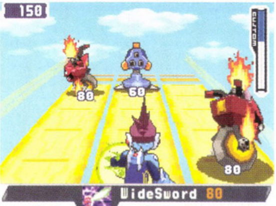
Of course, no Jedi—light or dark—should be without a lightsaber. Here you simply swing your Wii remote to slash your enemies. LucasArts originally tried to implement one-to-one control between your motions and the lightsaber swipes, but found that it would be too difficult to judge your lightsaber position as you were fighting. The controls they went with—where the game registers your horizontal and vertical motions—work rather well. You don't just slash with the lightsaber, though: you hold A and swing to throw your lightsaber, or hold A and rotate the remote horizontally to block. This latter feature becomes especially important in the Wii-exclusive Duel mode, where you choose from 27 characters (ranging from famous faces such as Luke Skywalker to the less familiar such as Aayla Secura) and nine arenas, then go head-to-head against a buddy.

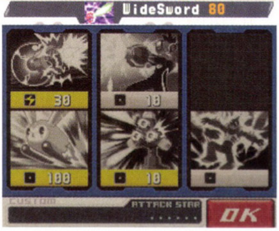
As you might expect, the DS version of The Force Unleashed plays a bit differently than its console sibling. While the basic narrative is identical, the DS version is almost exclusively touch-screen-centric, aside from using the Control Pad to move your character. All of your attacks—Force Push, lightsaber swinging, lightsaber throwing, etc.—are activated by pressing the virtual buttons on the touch screen. To combine attacks, you draw with the stylus from one attack to another. It's an intuitive combat system that helps keep the game from being a repetitive button-masher. Like in the Wii version, there's a multiplayer component, but it's broken up into two parts (both via local wireless): deathmatch for up to four players, and a two-player versus mode called Balance of the Force. —JUSTIN C.

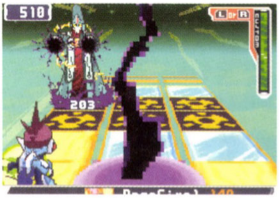


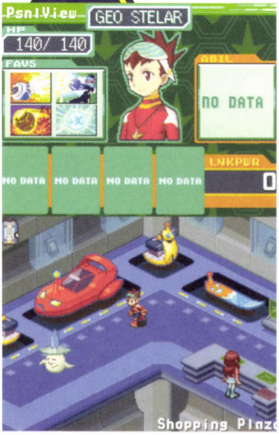
[Left] In the first level, you can live out your dream of being Darth Vader.











Catch More Waves

>MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM • RELEASE: JUNE 2008

Set a mere two months after the original Mega Man Star Force, the sequel picks up right where its predecessor left off. As human boy Geo Stelar you'll explore the physical world and go on adventures with your friends, but when you merge with alien ally Omega-Xis to become Mega Man, you can delve into the world of electromagnetic waves, where you'll bust viruses by unleashing battle cards in real-time 3-D clashes. The theme of interpersonal interaction also returns; you'll again form BrotherBands with characters in the game, and this time your friendships affect the abilities you can equip. Partway through the adventure, you'll find an object that, depending on which version of the game you're playing (Zerker X Saurian or Zerker X Ninja), lets Mega Man power-up into one of three forms: Fire Saurian, Wood Ninja, or Thunder Zerker. Play your cards right, and you may even get to perform a double or triple fusion and harness multiple special powers simultaneously. Ninja dinosaur, anyone? —CHRIS H.

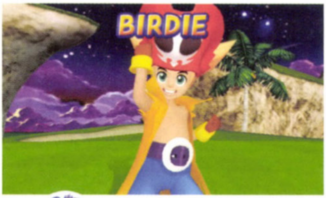
Time for Tee

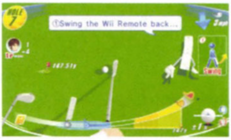
>WE LOVE GOLF!

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAMELOT • RELEASE: JULY 2008

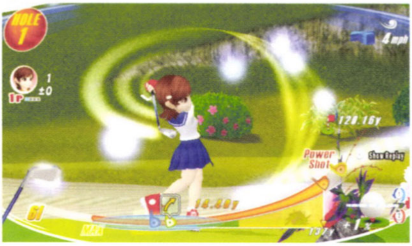
Camelot is best known for its pick-up-and-play sports titles (see Mario Golf and Mario Tennis), and We Love Golf! is no different in this regard. Hitting the ball is as easy as holding the A Button and swinging the Wii remote like a golf club, matching your strokes with the three-button-press-style meter on the bottom of the screen. (The controls are like a mix of Wii Sports Golf and Mario Golf.) For more-advanced shots, you can twist the Wii remote clockwise or counterclockwise to perform a fade or a draw, or you can press the 1 Button for topspin and the 2 Button for backspin. While this may seem confusing to the uninitiated, We Love Golf! features both visual and audio (via the Wii remote speaker) cues to help you out.

Up to four players can compete against each other—even better, you can personalize the experience by putting your Mii's head on any of the 12 established characters' bodies. If you'd rather test your skills against players around the country, you can go head-to-head against one other player online. What really excites many of us, though, are the unlockable Capcom costumes—who doesn't want to play golf with Apollo Justice or Jill Valentine? —JUSTIN C.





If you don't already know how to play the game, the anthropomorphic Wii remote offers helpful advice.



HOLE 2
Show Replay

HOLE 8
3 mph
Show Replay

Bountiful Harvest

>HARVEST MOON: TREE OF TRANQUILITY

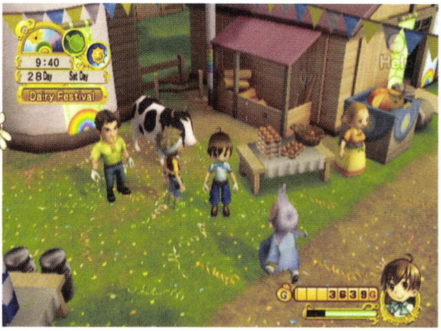
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS** • RELEASE: **JULY 2008**

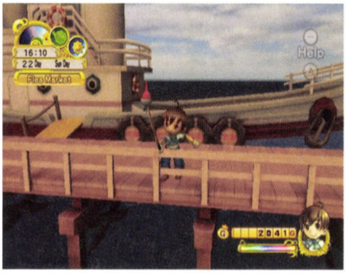
Gamers have been plowing fields, pulling udders, and living the life of a good ol' country boy (or girl) for more than a decade in Natsume's long-running Harvest Moon franchise. And later this year, you'll be able to experience the series in its most immersive form yet with Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility for Wii. Fans of the series know the drill—you start the game as a newcomer in a small, rustic village with only a little plot of land to your name; it's up to you to live the pure and simple life by plowing fields, planting crops, exploring mines, and fishing for fun, food, and profit. As you earn cash, you'll be able to buy more seeds, saplings, furniture, and livestock, thus slowly turning your tiny farm into a bustling ranch. What sets Tree of Tranquility apart, however, are the Wii controls. Although you can opt to play with traditional button presses, the game incorporates natural motions for all of your tools, such as holding the remote up and swinging it from side to side to swing an axe, and pulling the remote up then flicking it downward to cast a fishing line. Tree of Tranquility also includes several motion-controlled multiplayer minigames, including Mole Attack, in which up to four players run around and bash the mischievous critters with hammers. —CHRIS H.

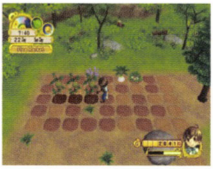
>HARVEST MOON DS: ISLAND OF HAPPINESS

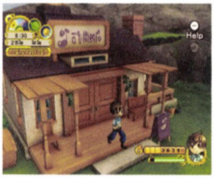
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

Despite how many Harvest Moon games have been published, they very rarely look alike. That odd trend continues with DS title Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness. In line with Magical Melody for GameCube and Tree of Tranquility for Wii, Island of Happiness features a more children's-book-style appearance, with big round faces and cartoonish animals rather than the look of the recent DS titles. While the look might change from one Harvest Moon to the next, the basic story remains tried and true. In Island of Happiness, you and a few others are cast off in a shipwreck, but happen to land on a beach adjacent to an abandoned village and fertile land. As time passes more people learn about the island's offerings, and soon the hamlet gets repopulated with all manner of entrepreneurs. With prime real estate and a lucrative farm operation, you stand to become quite an important member of this new community. Expect to give the touch screen a workout, as you can control virtually the entire game with the stylus. It takes a bit to get used to, but you'll be growing turnips and milking cows with aplomb in no time. —CHRIS SH.

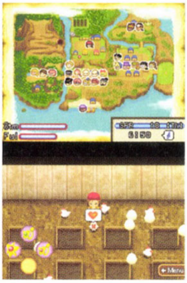


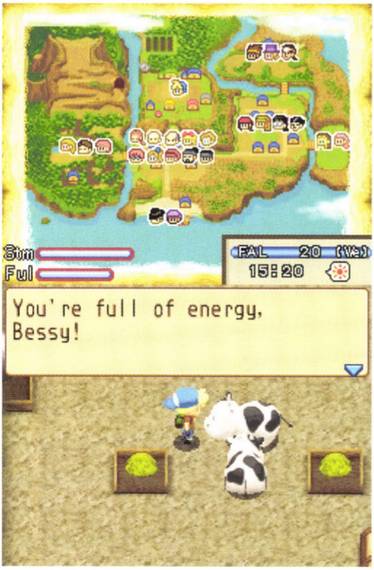




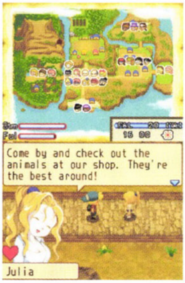


The joy of the Harvest Moon games is that you can earn your keep however you want—farming, fishing, spelunking, or through other means. And in Tree of Tranquility, you can do it using motion-based controls.





You're full of energy, Bessy!



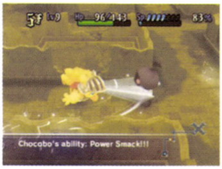
Come by and check out the animals at our shop. They're the best around!

Forget About It

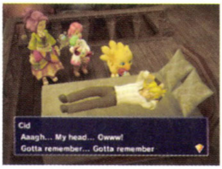
> FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO'S DUNGEON

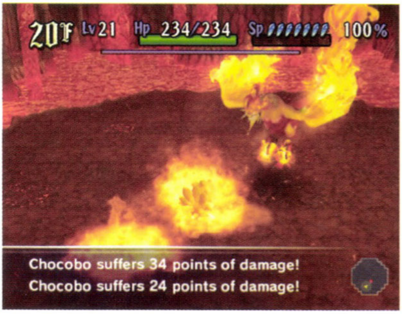
PLATFORM: Wii • **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: H.A.N.D • **RELEASE:** JULY 2008

The lovable Final Fantasy mascot, Chocobo, and his buddy Cid are explorers who just want to hunt for treasure, but that's all thrown out the window when the duo gets sucked into a mysterious city called Lostime. Though beautiful, Lostime holds a dark secret: The Bell of Oblivion, which rings at irregular intervals, wipes away the citizens' precious memories. Through a series of strange events (which involve a green-haired baby hatching out of an egg after falling from the sky), Chocobo gains the ability to reassemble the lost memories by exploring a series of randomly generated labyrinths. As in similar dungeon-crawlers, the top-down adventuring is fast-paced but turn-based; every time you move, attack, or perform an action, the enemies move as well. Unlike other games of the same ilk, this one is pretty user-friendly. You get to retain your experience and level when you restart dungeons, and you keep any equipped items if you fall in battle. The game has plenty of other nifty elements, including classic Final Fantasy job classes, a forge for improving your equipment, a card-battling minigame, and fantastic music that takes many cues from past Final Fantasy titles. —CHRIS H.


5F Lv9 Hp 96/143 Sp 83%

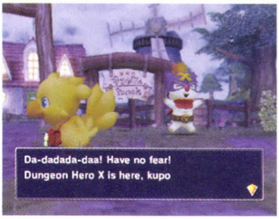
Chocobo's ability: Power Smack!!!


Cid
Aaagh... My head... Owww!
Gotta remember... Gotta remember


20F Lv21 Hp 234/234 Sp 100%

Chocobo suffers 34 points of damage!
Chocobo suffers 24 points of damage!

Almost every dungeon culminates in a boss battle against a powerful and imposing foe. You'll have to make use of Chocobo's skills and items to survive.


Da-dadada-daa! Have no fear!
Dungeon Hero X is here, kupo

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ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
ULTIMATE BRAIN GAMES
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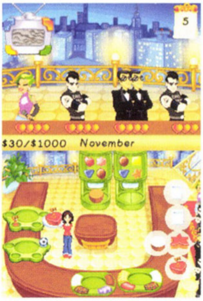
Web site: www.telegames.com

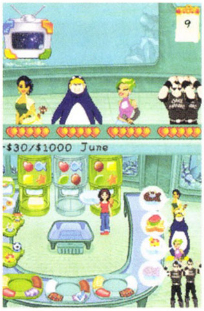
Second Slice

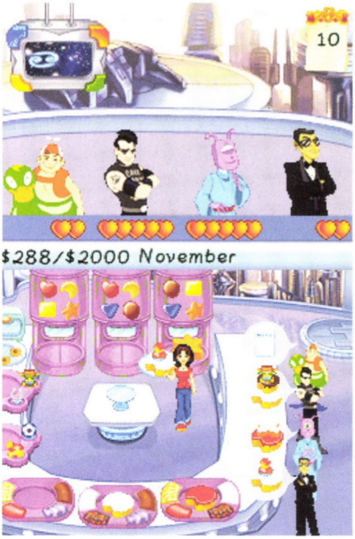
>CAKE MANIA 2

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **DIGITAL EMBRYO** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

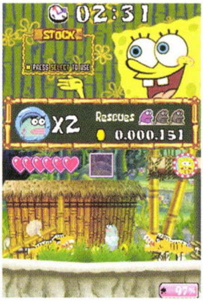
Because you can never have too much cake, the folks at Majesco and Digital Embryo are following up last year's Cake Mania with another sugary-sweet touch-driven action title. Like its predecessor, Cake Mania 2 is all about keeping customers satisfied by serving up a variety of mouth-watering treats. As bakery owner Jill, it's your job to choose the right batter, cake shape, frosting type, and decorations as per customers' orders, and to do it in record time to maximize your earnings. As the game progresses, you'll encounter more-demanding customers and receive fancier orders, but you'll also be able to buy 50 kitchen upgrades, such as better ovens, shoes to make you walk faster, and new equipment, such as the Frosterator (which both frosts and places toppings). Though the gameplay is very familiar, the story is all new; this time Jill is using her baking skills to help out her friends in numerous far-flung locales, including an underwater theme park and even the moon. The routes you take through the game will determine which ending you get, but we're sure they're all delicious. —**CHRIS H.**

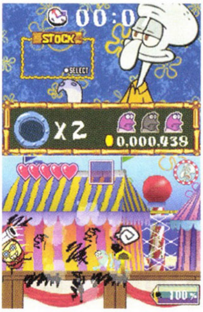


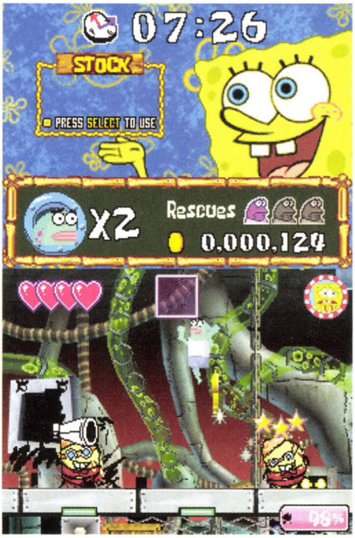




Jill's customers are a motley bunch. Each one has different behavior and tastes, and playing to their preferences makes the difference between failure and success.







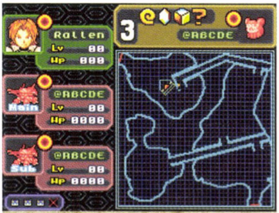
The action is limited only by your imagination; if you want to create a hero that looks like a mutant squirrel and uses Chuck Norris's head as a weapon, so be it.

Absorbent Art

>DRAWN TO LIFE: SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS EDITION

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **ALTRON** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

Last year's Drawn to Life added an awesome new twist to platformers: you got to actually create your own characters, objects, items, and weapons via the DS's touch screen. This fall the concept returns—now in the world of SpongeBob SquarePants. The game begins when two magic pencils fall into Bikini Bottom. One lands in the hands of the evil DoodleBob, who uses it to create an army of Doodle Dudes that destroy Bikini Bottom and imprison its citizens. SpongeBob obtains the other pencil, allowing you to draw a custom hero who can undo the madness. More than 20 levels of platforming follow, in which you'll punch and butt-stomp DoodleBob's minions, rescue townsfolk, draw a multitude of interactive objects, and erase evil doodles by rubbing the touch screen. SpongeBob, Patrick, and Squidward even lend a hand by providing special abilities such as shielding your hero or stunning enemies. In addition to the single-player main game, you can engage in drawing and coloring diversions or compete against a friend in two-player versus mode. —**CHRIS H.**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Jeena
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Main
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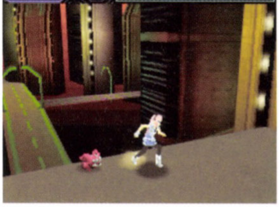


Above and Beyond

> SPECTROBES: BEYOND THE PORTALS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **JUPITER** • RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2008**

Disney's answer to Pokémon returns for more excavation and creature collection, but with an all-new perspective. The original title looked at character navigation from overhead, with both screens dedicated to a view of the environment. When Naniero Planetary Patrol officers Rallen and Jeena head out for their second tour, you'll see them in a lower, more 3-D-oriented view on the bottom screen, and observe team status and a map of the current area on the top screen. Jeena is a now playable character, allowing her to be more active in solving puzzles, many of which involve the appearance of several monster-producing portals. To combat the growing Krawl menace, the pair digs up fossils and uses them to create a new crew of bad-guy-battling Spectrobes. The game offers Spectrobe trading and battle via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and will launch DGamer, a service that allows Disney fans to chat with each other and download exclusive Disney content. —GEORGE S.

Rediscovered Treasure

> BANGAI-O SPIRITS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **D3PA**
DEVELOPER: **TREASURE** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

We've got good news and bad news. The bad news is that Bangai-O Spirits, the DS-exclusive follow-up to one of the most marvelously chaotic shooters of all time, has been delayed until fall. The good news is that developer Treasure is spending that extra time to tweak the game and create additional levels exclusive to the US version. Oh, and the other bit of good news is that the game is awesome.

Like its predecessor, Bangai-O Spirits is divided into bite-sized stages—more than 150 of them. The vast majority are brutally difficult, but they're so brilliantly designed that you feel compelled to keep trying even after you've been blown up for the umpteenth time. The game has a pronounced puzzle streak, and victory is often a matter of learning the right pattern or choosing the proper weapon to set off some insane sequence of explosions. And this is a game that revels in its explosions—missiles are launched like they're going out of style. Top it off with the ability to share user-created levels via the DS mic, and you've got another treasure in the making. —STEVE T.

1P L BREAK—HOMING R BOMB TIME
2 Y BAT SHIELD B 118 0:04
80
×2
48

TREASURE
1P
T4
T2T1
T3
T6
T8
T7
T5

1P FREEZE HOMING BOMB TIME
3 Y BAT BREAK 0 0:21
TREASURE

Oh Treasure, how do we love thee? Let us count the missiles.

1P L BREAK—HOMING R BOMB TIME
1 Y BAT SHIELD B 17 1:56
47

Gaming du Jour

>ORDER UP!

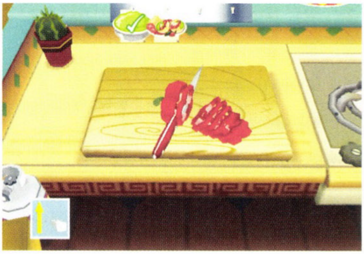
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ZOO**
DEVELOPER: **SUPERVILLAIN** • RELEASE: **JULY 2008**

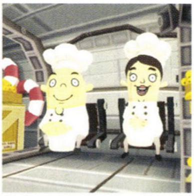
You may have played cooking video games before, but you've never played one like Order Up! While games like Cooking Mama let you create culinary masterpieces through bite-sized portions of structure-free gameplay, Order Up! gives you, quite literally, the whole enchilada. This pick-up-and-play chef simulator essentially lets you control an entire restaurant; you take the orders, hire assistant chefs, buy ingredients, prepare the food, and more as you make your way from a lowly fry cook to the greatest chef in the city of Port Abello. Along the way you'll turn five run-down eateries—a fast-food joint, an American diner, a Mexican restaurant, an Italian restaurant, and an upscale world-class restaurant—into critically acclaimed dining experiences.

Although it sounds like there's a lot to do in the game (and there is), it's all seamlessly built around the core experience of preparing and serving food. After you click on a table to take customers' orders, you'll find yourself in the kitchen, where you'll create each meal step-by-step. First you'll point and click with the A Button on the Wii remote to drag food items to various food stations—the cutting board, the stove top, the grill, or the deep-fat fryer—then you'll hold the B Button and make appropriate gestures to prepare each ingredient. For example, you'll make an up-and-down motion to flip pancakes, swing the remote downward to cut vegetables, twist the remote to roll chicken in bread crumbs, and slowly move the remote back and forth to spread butter on bread. There are dozens of recipes—including hamburgers, macaroni and cheese, chicken parmesan, pasta carbonara, huevos rancheros, tamales, guacamole, veal stew, and herb-encrusted swordfish—each with their own multistep preparation techniques.

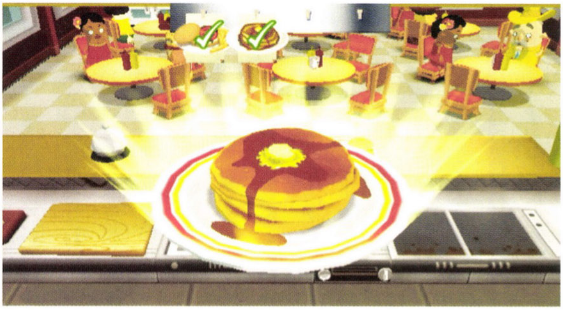
Even when you've got the cooking down to a science, however, you won't have time to relax. Since each table usually includes multiple customers, you'll want to get all the food prepared simultaneously, which means you may be frantically grilling meat, mixing batter, and tearing off leaves of lettuce at the same time. This is when assistant chefs come in handy—if you drag food items to them, they can take some of the prep work off your hands. There are 12 unique assistants in the game, and though it costs money to hire them, they provide a number of benefits; for instance, one of them uses his sales skills to convince patrons to buy the daily special.

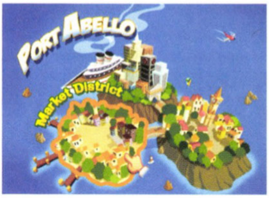
Situational minigames (such as repelling rats when you accumulate too much trash) further add to the fun, while 4,000 lines of recorded dialogue promise to keep players amused. The result is a game that looks like it will have more flavor than an all-you-can-eat buffet. —**CHRIS H.**

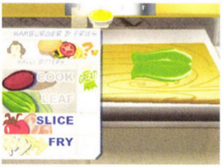


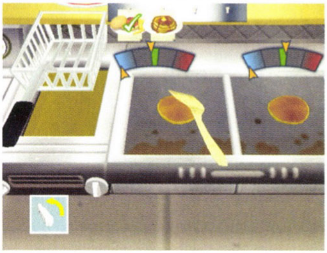


The chefs of Order Up! may look weird, but they sure know how to cook.

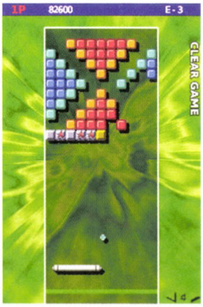


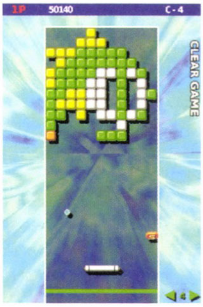


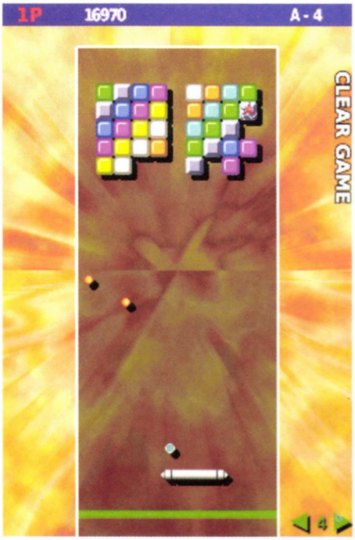




Every recipe consists of multiple steps in which you prepare ingredients by making realistic motions with the Wii remote.







As you break through the blocks, you'll acquire several types of power-ups, including one that splits your Energy Ball to triple your brick-busting ability.

The Lost Ark

> ARKANOID DS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **TAITO** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

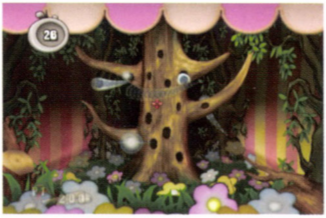
Arkanoid may be more than 20 years old, but good gameplay never goes out of style. Taito's DS reinvention of the classic uses a vertical play field that spans across both of the handheld's screens. You slide the Vaus (a space-age paddle) by using the Control Pad or the stylus to hit your Energy Ball into breakable blocks, and collect capsules that give your paddle new powers. Clear Game mode offers 28 zones, 140 block patterns, and a sci-fi story that unfolds between rounds. Vs. Com mode challenges you to break all of the blocks (or the blocks of a specific color) before a CPU opponent does the same, providing good practice for local or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-enabled multiplayer matches. Quest Game mode gives you a variety of tasks and a time limit, and allows you to earn points, which you can trade in for backgrounds and icons. It's all wrapped up in pretty package with a soundtrack that mixes retro bleeps and blips with contemporary Japanese music. —**GEORGE S.**

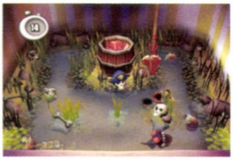
Fun Stroke

> WONDER WORLD AMUSEMENT PARK

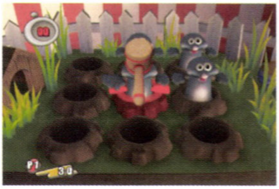
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COYOTE CONSOLE** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

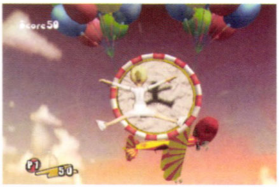
Majesco brings all of the fun of a family vacation without the sunburn or car sickness in Wonder World Amusement Park. Designed for party gamers, the title allows up to four participants to zip through five themed worlds, each featuring an interactive ride and a slew of minigames. In the carnival-themed area, for example, the main attraction is Bumper Cars, in which the object is to knock other drivers out of the ring. In the pirating-themed area, the ride is Pirate Ship, where those who lose a food fight wash off in open waters after walking the plank. The fun continues in a fairytale-inspired land, outer space, and a locale called Spookyville. Motion control—throwing, shooting, pumping, and shaking—is at the core of the minigames. With victory, you earn tickets that let you purchase outfits and accessories. Step into the Hall of Mirrors to preview your new look before you walk out into the rest of the park. A single-player mode provides a story, and a practice mode lets you perfect your minigame play before the competition begins. —**GEORGE S.**



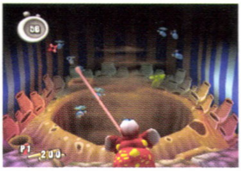


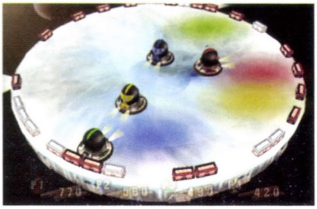
[Below] The Sky Cannon ride is crazier than anything we've experienced at a real amusement park.





[Above] Aw, aren't they cute? Better whack them with hammers!



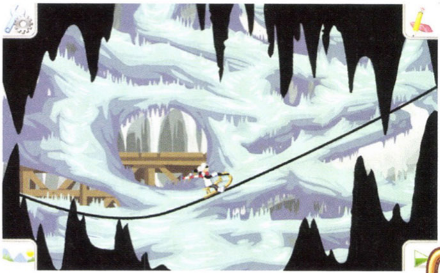


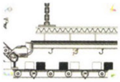
Hard Sleddin'

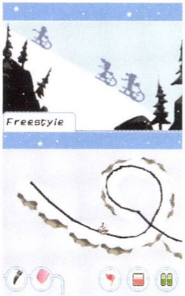
>LINE RIDER 2: UNBOUND

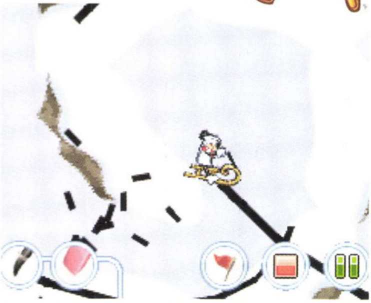
PLATFORM: **Wii, DS** • PUBLISHER: **GENIUS PRODUCTS**
DEVELOPER: **INXILE ENT.** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

Originally conceived by a Slovenian-university art student, Line Rider has become an Internet phenomenon with more than 16 million users. More toy than game, the Flash-based program lets you create a track—as simple or intricate as you like— to lead your diminutive sledder across the finish line. This summer the follow-up heads to both Wii and DS with a host of new features, including updated visuals and an all-new story mode featuring more than 40 puzzles designed by TechDawg, the world's foremost Line Rider expert. Each puzzle has a certain number of gaps that you must fill to help your sledder reach the goal, and a variety of new line types—from acceleration lines to trap-door lines—makes things especially tricky. As with the original, though, the big draw is user-generated content. A comprehensive level editor lets you craft your own stages, right down to the background scenery and sound effects. (You can even include parallax scrolling!) When you're finished, you'll be able to share your creations via a personal web page that serves as an online repository. See you on the slopes! —STEVE T.


It's sort of like riding the Matterhorn at Disneyland, only with less risk of being consumed by a mechanical yeti.





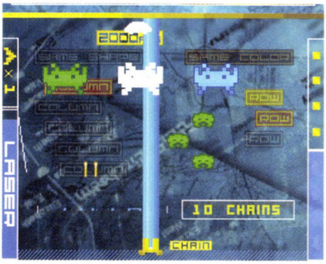


Back to the Future

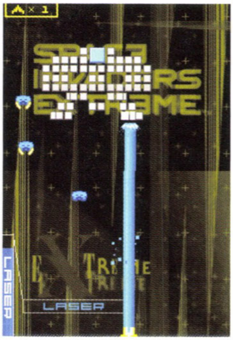
>SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

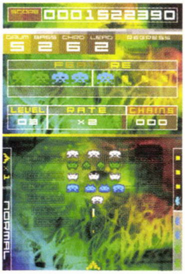
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **TAITO** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

After the polar ice caps have melted and people are living on Mars, it would not be a stretch to think that they will be playing Space Invaders Extreme. With its spiffy gameplay-and-graphics redesign, the 1978 classic has vaulted past present-day gaming and leapt into the future. A multilayered background moves and shimmers while alien hordes, laser shots, and power-ups drop into the bottom screen, leaving you precious little room to maneuver and no time to react. The action is so intense, you'd think that it was designed for supercomputers to play. If there's any chance that you might be bored by nonstop shooting, the game introduces bonus games seemingly at random in midbattle. The invaders look like they did 30 years ago, but they range in size from microscopic to screen-filling. You chip away at the oversized bosses by blasting alien-sized squares that represent the pixels of the original invaders. Multiplayer mode adds to the anarchy and Ranking mode lets you compare your scores with others worldwide. —GEORGE S.



Although you're still shooting at pixelated aliens, this definitely ain't your father's Space Invaders. The visuals are trippy and the action's intense.





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FEATURE
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RAINBOW BONUS
10,000 PTS
40 CHAINS
FEVER

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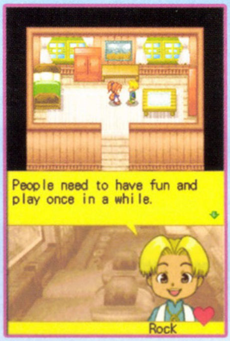
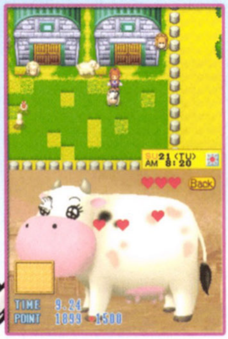
Forget-Me-Not Valley has lost its magic! It's up to you to bring it back by planting crops, raising livestock, and starting a family!


People need to have fun and play once in a while.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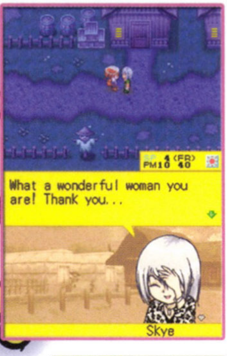
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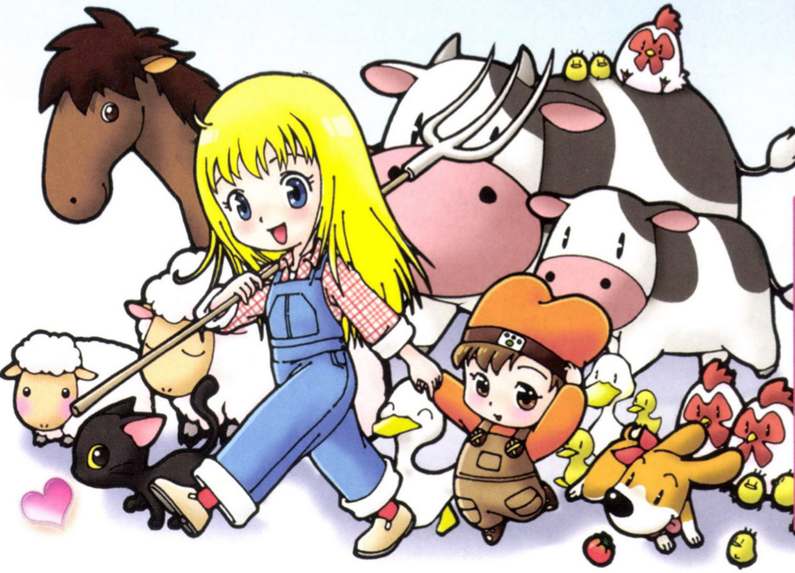
PM10 40
What a wonderful woman you are! Thank you...
Skye



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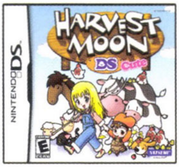
NINTENDO DS
HARVEST MOON
DS Cute

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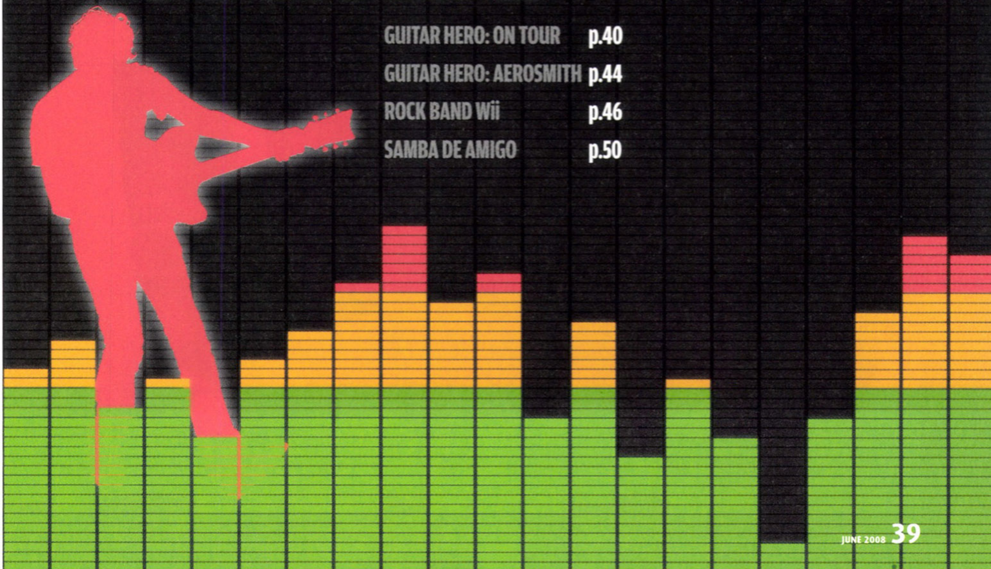
THE NEXT BIG MUSIC GAMES

GUITAR HERO: ON TOUR p.40
GUITAR HERO: AEROSMITH p.44
ROCK BAND Wii p.46
SAMBA DE AMIGO p.50



We go hands-on with Guitar Hero: On Tour, a fresh, new, portable take on the series.

GET A GRIP

BY JUSTIN CHENG

Guitar Hero has become such a pop culture phenomenon that there was an entire *South Park* episode about the game, and even acclaimed actress Jodie Foster demonstrated her Guitar Hero aptitude on an April 4 appearance on the *Rachael Ray* television show. So how can a franchise as big and mainstream as Guitar Hero possibly get bigger? By making its debut on the DS.

Enter Guitar Hero: On Tour and its accompanying peripheral, the Guitar Grip (more on that later). With the two, developer Vicarious Visions and publisher RedOctane are giving you the opportunity to rock out with Guitar Hero wherever you go. But don't think it was as easy as cramming the game onto the handheld and slapping a peripheral on it. According to Karthik Bala, studio head at Vicarious Visions, "It was very tricky to push the visual quality and animation, and most importantly bring a large number of songs with high audio quality to the DS."

THE TRACKS

Guitar Hero: On Tour features a wide selection of songs. Here's a sampling.

VENUE: SUBWAY
OK Go "Do What You Want"
blink-182 "All the Small Things"
No Doubt "Spiderwebs"
Jet "Are You Gonna Be My Girl"
Twisted Sister "We're Not Gonna Take It"

VENUE: ROOFTOP
Smash Mouth "All Star"
Nirvana "Breed"
Rick Springfield "Jessie's Girl"
Pat Benatar "Hit Me With Your Best Shot"
Maroon 5 "This Love"

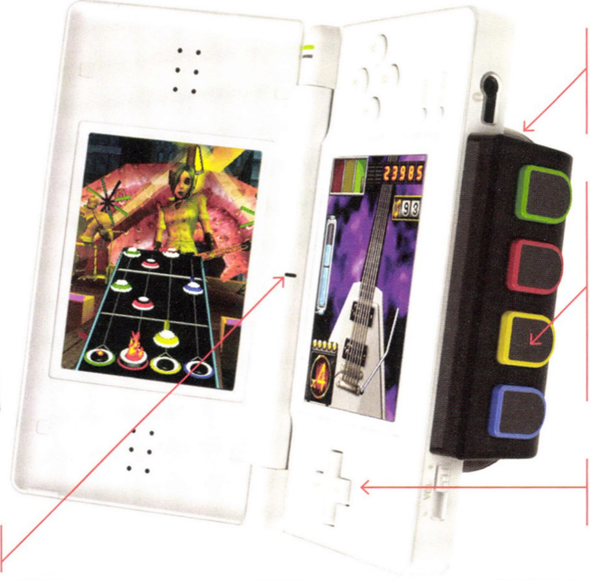
VENUE: PARADE
Los Lonely Boys "Heaven"
Bloc Party "Helicopter"
The Doobie Brothers "China Grove"
KISS (covered by Line 6) "Rock and Roll All Nite"
Daughtry "What I Want"

The songs—about 25 in all—represent a range of rock styles, from classic rock to contemporary alternative pop. "We've packed 20 exclusive songs on the DS cartridge, along with a number of our favorite songs from Guitar Hero III," Bala tells us. "It was a difficult selection process, but we wanted the game to appeal to the broad DS demographic, so there's something for everyone!"

HOLD ON TIGHT

"We've made many games for the DS, so the team was intimately familiar with the system. The challenge was to bring a new tactile experience to the DS, which required the development of the Guitar Grip," explains Bala. Much thought, time, and cooperation were necessary before they came up with the final product. Says Bala, "Development of the Guitar Grip was a very collaborative effort between Vicarious Visions, RedOctane, and Nintendo. Once we developed the original electronics design and prototype at Vicarious Visions, we worked with the hardware experts at RedOctane to develop lots of different form factors. Nintendo really helped us refine the design, bringing their unique hardware-design sensibilities to make it truly feel like an extension of the DS hardware itself." The end result is well worth their efforts. Holding the DS with the Guitar Grip plugged into the GBA slot feels comfortable, and we were able to start rocking out as soon as we picked up the DS. Simply press

GUITAR HERO

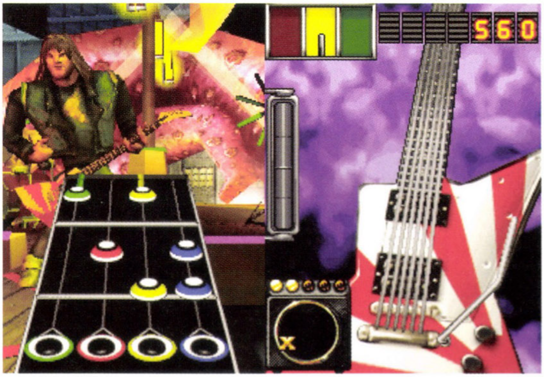


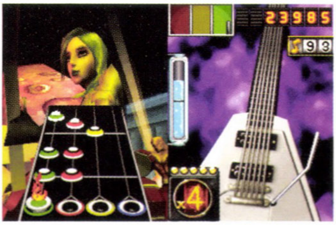
There's a hand strap underneath so you don't accidentally throw your DS while you're rocking out.

You might think having four fret buttons rather than five might make the game too easy (despite the buttons being smaller on the DS than on the console peripheral), but it's still plenty challenging.

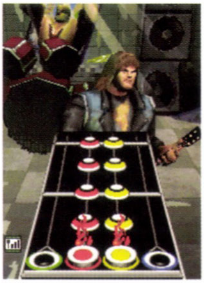
You can also deploy Star Power by pressing any of the face buttons.

Yell or blow into the microphone to activate Star Power.





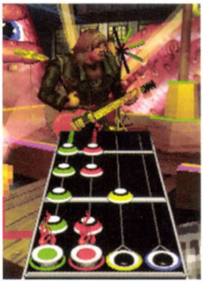
There are six playable characters to choose from, and two of them are exclusive to this game.



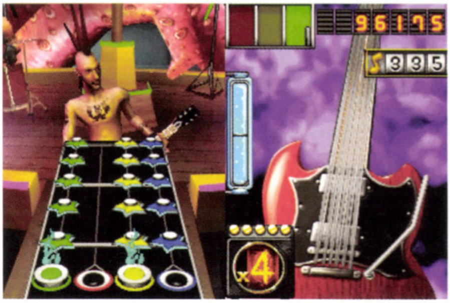
the appropriate color of fret button as the notes cascade down the screen, and use the included Guitar Pick stylus anywhere on the touch screen to strum. Because your hand is held in place by the Guitar Grip's strap, your fingers never move around, so you're almost always positioned over the fret buttons.

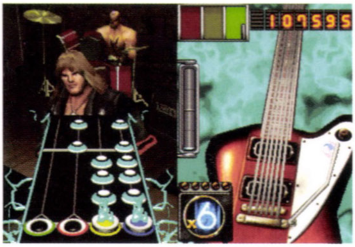
Guitar Hero fans have wondered whether On Tour, with only four buttons as opposed to the usual five, would be able to maintain the challenge level of the previous games. Bala addresses this very issue: "Easy mode is actually a bit easier than GHIII Easy mode. However, Expert is *very* challenging, even for Guitar Hero veterans. It not only requires fast fingers on the buttons, but also expert guitar picking with the Guitar Pick stylus. Our studio musicians tell us that on Expert, it's very similar to actual playing with a pick on a guitar."

Luckily, you have the score-multiplying Star Power at your disposal to get you through the toughest parts. Unlike in prior GH games, though, you don't tilt the controller to initiate Star Power. Bala tells us, "Players can yell or blow into the microphone to activate Star Power. Alternatively, one can tap the Star Power meter on the touch screen, or any of the face buttons will work. We recommend yelling 'Rock on!' into the mic to activate Star Power, but we know that some people will play the game in noisy environments. Players can turn the microphone off and just use the touch screen or buttons if they choose." This should please easily embarrassed gamers.

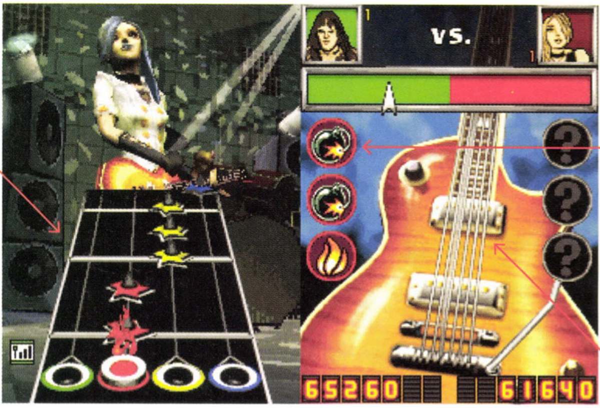


As you can probably tell by these screenshots, On Tour can get pretty challenging. Don't break your DS!





[Above] It wouldn't be Guitar Hero without Star Power. Fortunately, On Tour gives you several ways to activate it, from pressing a button to yelling "rock on!"



Holding the DS vertically is comfortable and it gives you more time to see the notes coming (since the screen is taller vertically than horizontally).

This meter lets you know who's winning. You can also look at the scores at the bottom of the screen.

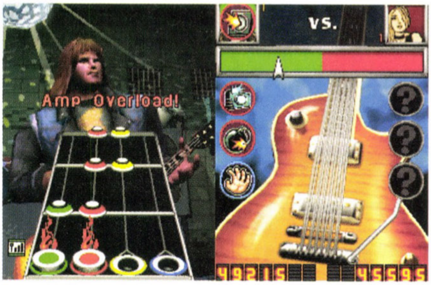
Double-tap the power-up icons to use them against your opponent.

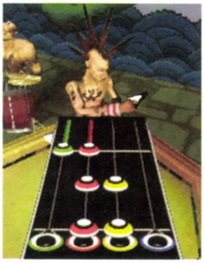
Use the Guitar Pick stylus to strum the strings and hit the whammy bar. Simply scratch back and forth on the touch screen with the stylus to whammy during long notes.

GUITAR FIGHTER

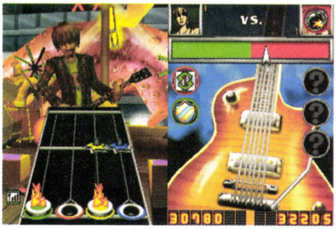
It's best to master the controls in the single-player game before challenging others via local wireless. Like in Guitar Hero III, there are head-to-head and co-op modes, but there's also a new mode called Guitar Duels that can be played against a single AI or human opponent. "In [Guitar Duels], players go head-to-head on a song and purposely try to trip each other up using various power-ups as lethal attacks," Bala elaborates. "For example, we have power-ups such as Pyrotechnics Gone Wrong, which will ignite the opponent's guitar. They need to blow out the fire—using the microphone—to keep playing. Another power-up is Autograph, which forces the opponent to sign a crazed fan's T-shirt or book before they get out of the way." A particularly effective power-up (and particularly annoying for the player on the receiving end) is the Screen Flip, which swaps your opponent's screens, forcing him to strum over the notes instead of the strings. Fortunately, power-ups like the Shield protect you from your opponent's attacks.

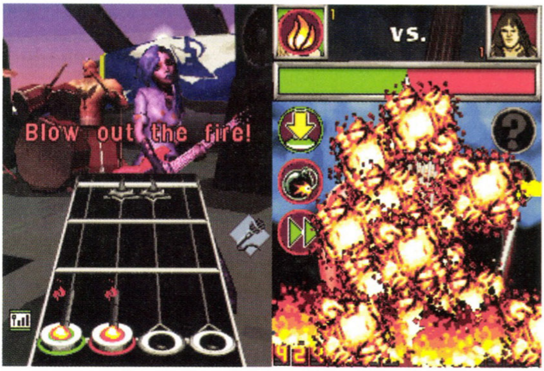
After having played Guitar Hero: On Tour, we're pleased to report that the game works remarkably well on the handheld. Sure, it takes some time to get acclimated to playing the familiar Guitar Hero in a slightly new way, but it's refreshing and, more importantly, fun. We can't wait to play more when the game is released this summer.





While Guitar Hero: On Tour's main single-player mode is all about accuracy, the multiplayer Guitar Duels are all about hurting your opponent with crazy attacks.





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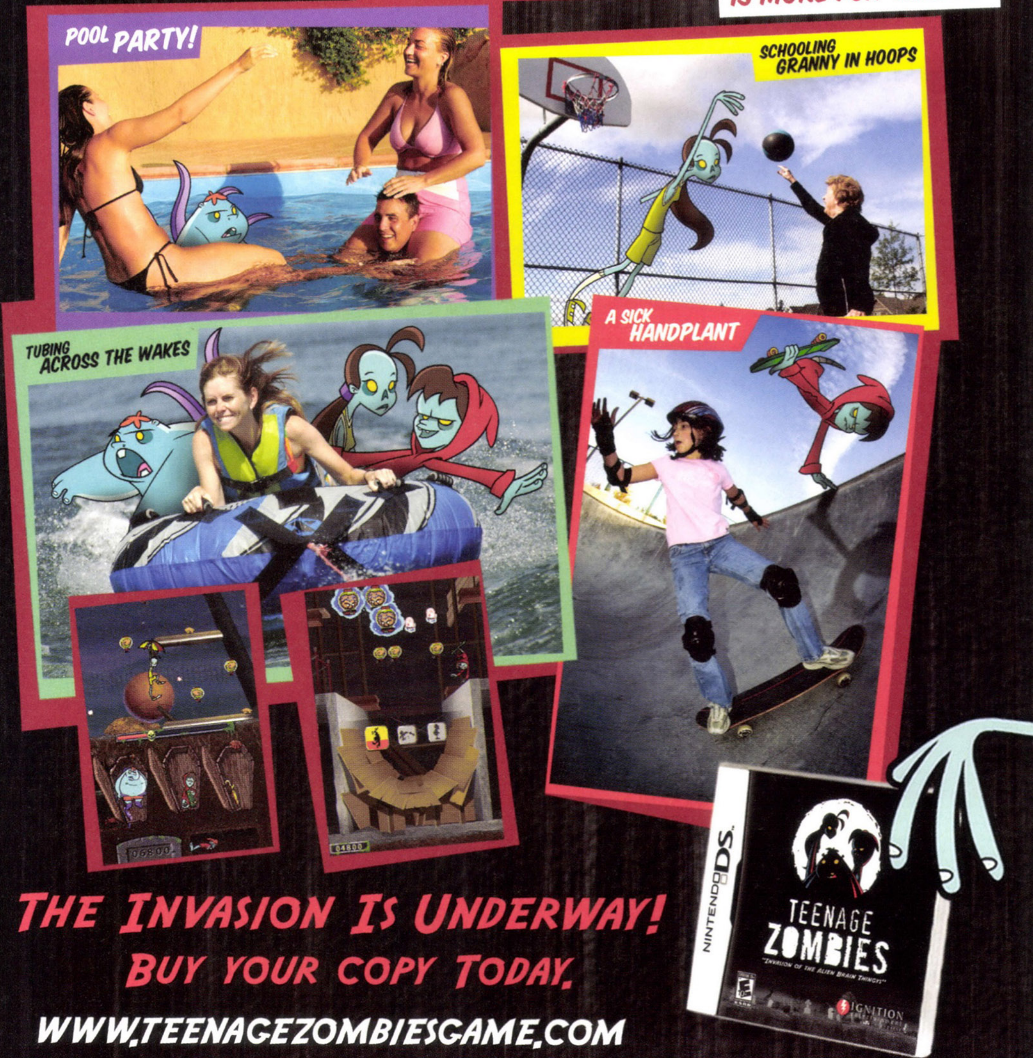
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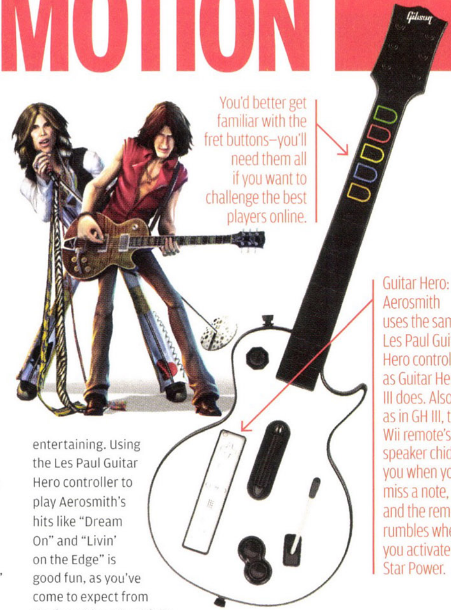
Break out your scarves—Guitar Hero's back on Wii with a decidedly Aerosmith-heavy soundtrack.

SWEET Wii-MOTION

BY JUSTIN CHENG

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is, as you would expect, Guitar Hero with a lot of Aerosmith songs. But it's also more than that—developer Vicarious Visions and publisher RedOctane wanted to make a game that pays tribute to the rock legends.



You'd better get familiar with the fret buttons—you'll need them all if you want to challenge the best players online.

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith uses the same Les Paul Guitar Hero controller as Guitar Hero III does. Also as in GH III, the Wii remote's speaker chides you when you miss a note, and the remote rumbles when you activate Star Power.

"[Guitar Hero: Aerosmith] really chronicles the 30-year career of Aerosmith all the way from their first-ever concert at Nipmuc High School," explains Vicarious Visions studio head Karthik Bala. "The landmark venues were picked specifically because they have significance to Aerosmith's career and rise to fame." The venues themselves have been re-created almost exactly based on the available reference materials—for example, the Max's KC nightclub venue was built from watching a YouTube video thousands of times because that's all that was available.

THE TRACKS

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith will feature over 40 tracks. Here's a sampling.

VENUE: NIPMUC
Mott the Hoople "All the Young Dudes"
Cheap Trick "Dream Police"
Aerosmith "Make It"
Aerosmith "Uncle Salty"
Aerosmith "Draw the Line"

VENUE: MAX'S KC
Joan Jett "I Hate Myself for Loving You"
The Kinks "All Day and All of the Night"
Aerosmith "Movin' Out"
Aerosmith "No Surprize"
Aerosmith "Sweet Emotion"

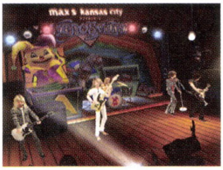
VENUE: THE ORPHEUM
The Clash "Complete Control"
New York Dolls "Personality Crisis"
Aerosmith "Livin' on the Edge"
Aersomith "Rag Doll"
Aerosmith "Love in an Elevator"

VENUE: HALF TIME SHOW
Lenny Kravitz "Always on the Run"
Black Crowes "Hard to Handle"
Aerosmith "Back in the Saddle"
Aerosmith "Beyond Beautiful"
Aerosmith "Dream On"

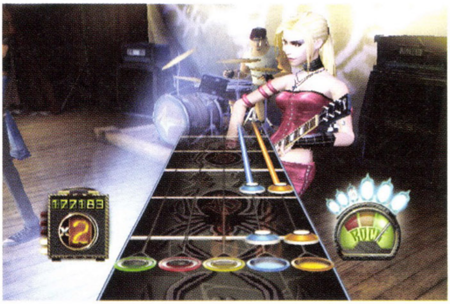
The developers spent a long time working with the band to ensure an authentic experience. "The band really wanted to make a great game," says Bala. "Specific motion-capture sessions were arranged for every band member, with a ton of mo-cap for Joe Perry and frontman Steven Tyler. Steven did performances for every single song—including full-body mo-cap and facial capture. They are total perfectionists, and they paid a lot of attention to the details." That close scrutiny definitely helped improve the game's quality, especially in the visuals department. Just half a year has passed since the release of Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock, and Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is definitely a more attractive and dynamic-looking game, partially due to what the developers call "music video-style" camera angles.

Games are all about gameplay, though, and this latest Guitar Hero delivers. It's about as challenging as Guitar Hero III, and just as entertaining. Using the Les Paul Guitar Hero controller to play Aerosmith's hits like "Dream On" and "Livin' on the Edge" is good fun, as you've come to expect from the franchise. Thankfully, the game has been rebalanced so that it's much more accessible for newer players. And like Guitar Hero III, Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is playable online via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, so you can test your axe skills against the nation's best.

It's an interesting experiment, this Aerosmith-centric Guitar Hero. Will it appeal to gamers who aren't already fans of the band? Considering the game is actually split 60-40 between Aerosmith songs and other bands' songs (bands that influenced Aerosmith and bands that Aerosmith has influenced), we think yes, but we'll find out for sure when Guitar Hero: Aerosmith takes to the stage in June.



Before you perform in a new venue in the single-player game, documentary-style interviews show the band talking about their history at the venue.



Instead of playing as one of the Aerosmith band members, you play as one of the longtime Guitar Hero characters, such as Casey Lynch or Judy Nails.

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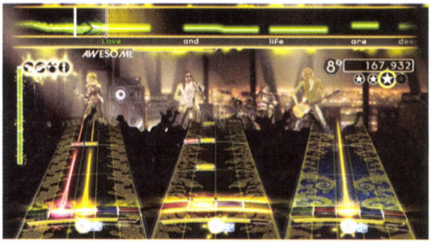
The Rock Band revolution rocks and rolls its way onto Wii.

Wii WILL ROCK YOU

BY JUSTIN CHENG

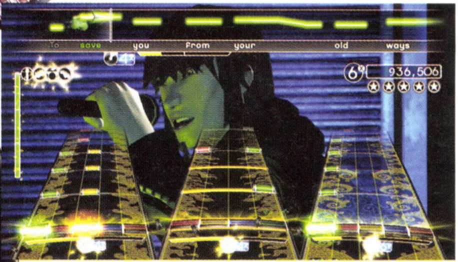
Hip-hop group Cypress Hill once posed the question, "So you wanna be a rock superstar?" The answer for many—regardless of musical ability—is a resounding yes. And that's a major reason why developer Harmonix and publisher MTV Games have had such success with Rock Band. That, and the fact that playing songs with a group of friends is a lot of fun.



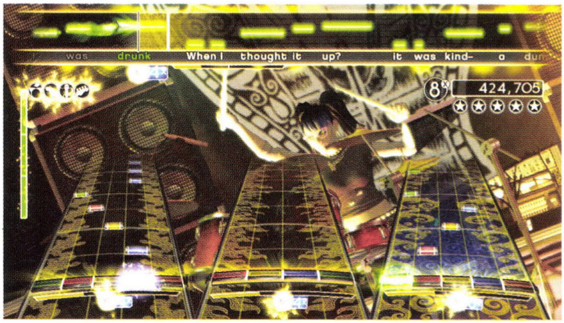
The developers have been hard at work on the series' Wii debut. Matt Kelly, a producer at Harmonix, tells us, "It was a great experience working with Nintendo. We didn't really know what we were getting into when we started because we had never done a Wii game before, and we were really surprised by some of the things that the platform can do. It's been very good. It's been very positive. We wanted to make sure when we were doing it that the Rock Band experience that people are already familiar with was carried over faithfully, and I think we definitely nailed it." Having played the Wii version extensively ourselves, we agree—as soon as Harmonix brought the game into our office, we picked up the instruments and started jamming.

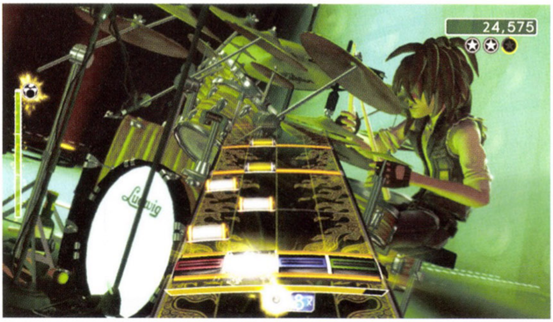
ROCK ON

For those who have never seen the game, check out the screenshots and the peripherals—a microphone, a guitar, and a drum kit—to get the gist. Simply put, Rock Band is like Guitar Hero with singing and drumming—it even has its own version of Guitar Hero's Star Power, called Overdrive. (The similarity makes sense: Harmonix developed the original Guitar Hero games.) But it's the combination of the guitar, drums, vocals, and bass (if you purchase another guitar) that pushes Rock Band beyond being just another rhythm game. Kelly



Sure, you may not be able to create your own characters, but when you're playing the game with four players, you probably won't care all that much.





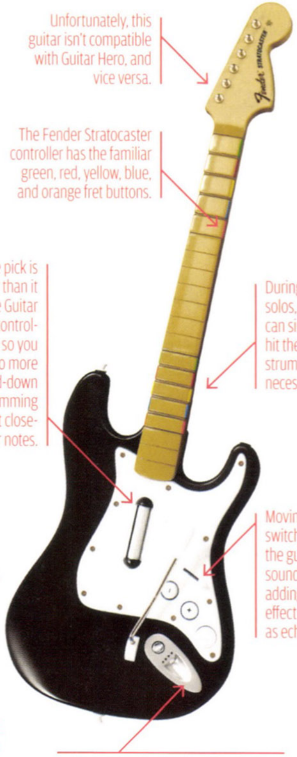
enthuses, "The Wii is such a social gaming platform that [we wanted to make sure] that the experience is the best that it could possibly be when everyone's in the same room. I think that's where Wii really shines, and where Rock Band really shines. The party group/social atmosphere of it.... There's just something kind of neat that happens when you get a bunch of people playing."

GREATEST HITS

For a game like this to prosper, though, you need a strong song list. With 58 songs from the previous versions of the game, along with five new songs for the Wii edition, there should be something for everybody. "Making a band game is tough, and choosing songs for a band game is tough, because they need to be awesome, iconic rock tunes from a bunch of

If you want to try singing while playing an instrument, consider purchasing a microphone stand.

The other end of this cable plugs into the Wii's USB port. Don't worry about the fact that there are only two USB ports on the console—a USB hub is included when you buy the Rock Band set.



Unfortunately, this guitar isn't compatible with Guitar Hero, and vice versa.

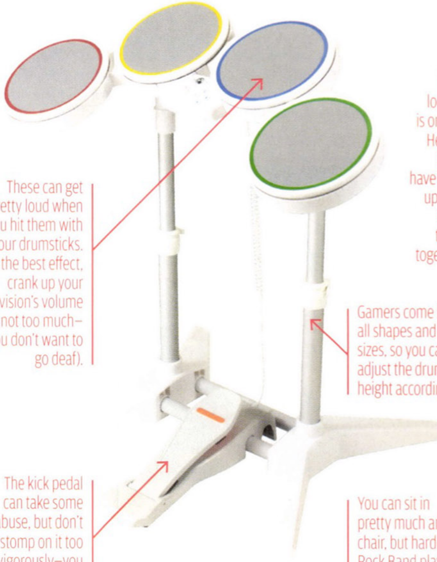
The Fender Stratocaster controller has the familiar green, red, yellow, blue, and orange fret buttons.

The pick is looser than it is on the Guitar Hero controllers, so you have to do more up-and-down strumming to hit close-together notes.

During guitar solos, you can simply hit these—no strumming necessary.

Moving this switch alters the guitar's sound, adding effects such as echoes.

Look, ma! No wires! You simply plug in a dongle to your Wii's USB port.



These can get pretty loud when you hit them with your drumsticks. For the best effect, crank up your television's volume (but not too much—you don't want to go deaf).

Gamers come in all shapes and sizes, so you can adjust the drums' height accordingly.

The kick pedal can take some abuse, but don't stomp on it too vigorously—you don't want to break it.

You can sit in pretty much any chair, but hardcore Rock Band players will invest in a drum stool.

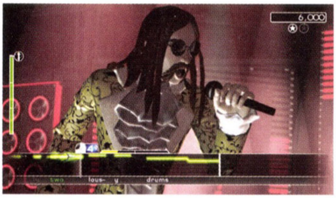
THE TRACKS

Here's a complete list of the songs in the game.

The Clash "Should I Stay or Should I Go"
Nirvana "In Bloom"
Yeah Yeah Yeahs "Maps"
Mountain* "Mississippi Queen"
The Mother Hips "Time We Had"
OK Go "Here It Goes Again"
Ramones "Blitzkrieg Bop"
The Acro-brats "Day Late, Dollar Short"
Pixies "Wave of Mutilation"
Garbage "I Think I'm Paranoid"
R.E.M. "Orange Crush"
Vagiant "Seven"
Nine Inch Nails "The Hand That Feeds"
The Konks "29 Fingers"
Beastie Boys "Sabotage"
Weezer "Say It Ain't So"
Flyleaf "I'm So Sick"
Foo Fighters "Learn to Fly"
Queens of the Stone Age "Go with the Flow"
KISS "Detroit Rock City"
Radiohead "Creep"
Anarchy Club "Blood Doll"
The Killers "When You Were Young"
Hole "Celebrity Skin"
The New Pornographers "Electric Version"
The Rolling Stones "Gimme Shelter"
Crooked X "Nightmare"
David Bowie "Suffragette City"
Soundgarden "Black Hole Sun"
Honest Bob and the Factory-to-Dealer Incentives "I Get By"
The Hives "Main Offender"
The Strokes "Reptilia"
Faith No More "Epic"
Tribe "Outside"
Jet "Are You Gonna Be My Girl"
Red Hot Chili Peppers "Dani California"
Blue Oyster Cult "(Don't Fear) The Reaper"
Black Sabbath* "Paranoid"
Bon Jovi "Wanted Dead or Alive"
Sweet* "Ballroom Blitz"
Fall Out Boy "Dead on Arrival"
Freezepop "Brainpower"
Stone Temple Pilots "Vasoline"
The Police "Next to You"
The Who "Won't Get Fooled Again"
Rush* "Tom Sawyer"
Boston "Foreplay/Long Time"
Death of the Cool "Can't Let Go"
Smashing Pumpkins "Cherub Rock"
Metallica "Enter Sandman"
Coheed and Cambria "Welcome Home"
Deep Purple "Highway Star"
Molly Hatchet "Flirtin' with Disaster"
Timmy & the Lords of the Underworld "Timmy & the Lords of the Underworld"
Aerosmith* "Train Kept A Rollin'"
Bang Camaro "Pleasure (Pleasure)"
Iron Maiden* "Run to the Hills"
The Outlaws* "Green Grass and High Tides"

BONUS Wii SONGS
The Police "Roxanne"
Ramones "Rockaway Beach"
All-American Rejects "Dirty Little Secret"
Oasis "Don't Look Back in Anger"
The B-52s "Roam"

* This song is played by a cover band, not the original artist.



He knows chang- es aren't per- ma- nent
4x
6x
629,286

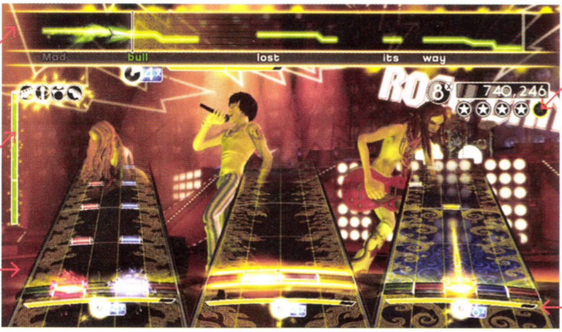
Sadly, you can't go online with this version of Rock Band.

different decades that people like, that are great songs in their own right, but you also have to pick songs that are interesting for each part to play," Kelly reveals. "If you have a song that's got a 10-minute guitar solo in it where it's just guitar, it's going to be really boring for the bass player and drummer, right? One of the things we did for vocals is that there are solos in songs, so part of the reason why we added the ability to do the hand claps or the cow bell for 'Don't Fear the Reaper' through the vocals was just to keep the vocalist engaged and give them something to do while there are guitar solos. It's finding that balance...you want to find songs that are great, but you also want to find songs that have something interesting going on for each of the four parts."

CH-CH-CHANGES

Some compromises had to be made to bring Rock Band to Wii. For instance, there's no create-a-character mode in the Wii version. Kelly explains, "It was one of the things that we looked at bringing over, and basically, first and foremost, [we wanted to] make sure the four-player band experience is supertight and polished, and basically you won't be able to tell a difference [in] it no matter what console you're playing on." In other words, being able to create a character would hurt the overall quality of the game, which the developers wanted to avoid.

The move to Wii may bring new features to the franchise in the future, however, as Kelly hints: "There are so many cool things that we have ideas for internally, specific to the console, like cool stuff that we could envision doing, so...without being able to talk about specifics, there's a lot of potential, I think for Rock Band as a franchise, but specifically for Rock Band on the Wii, to do some really cool, neat stuff that would be really tailored to the Wii's unique feature set." It sounds promising, but we'll have to wait and see what Harmonix has in store for us. In the meantime, you can rock out on your Wii when Rock Band is released in June.



Singers, pay attention to this part of the screen, and try to match the pitch of your voice to that of the song's real singer.

This meter shows how everyone's doing. If anyone falls behind and fails out, other players can deploy their Overdrive to resuscitate him.

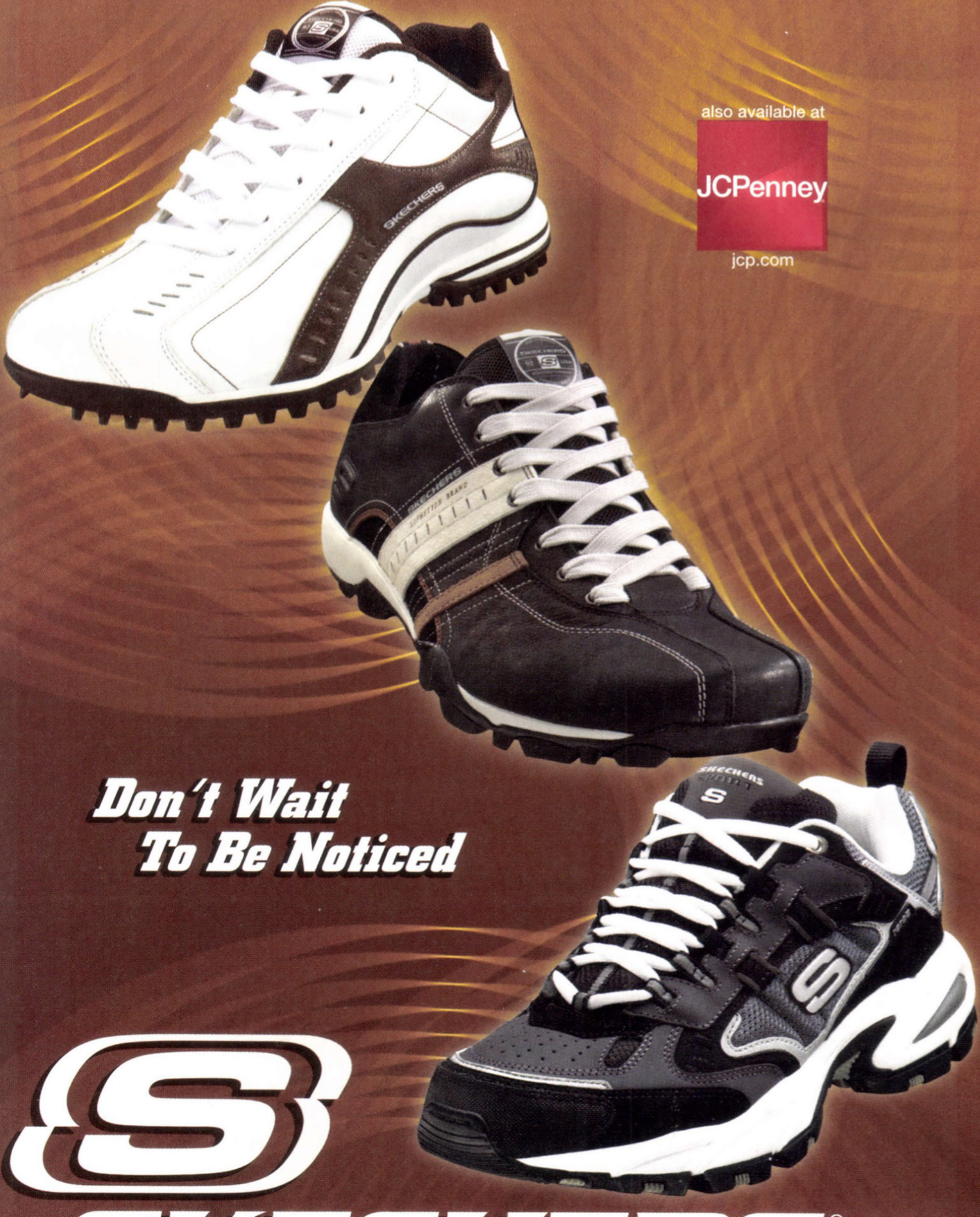
The guitar will likely be the easiest instrument for you to play if you're an old hand at Guitar Hero.

How good is your band? Check out these stars to find out. Truly awesome bands that play on Expert will get *gold* stars.

Here's where you can monitor your Overdrive. When you use Overdrive, a yellow pattern appears on your note highway.

Drummers have to watch for giant orange bars as well as the usual colored notes—orange bars mean you have to hit the kick pedal. Unless you play drums in real life, you probably shouldn't jump right into the higher difficulty levels.

Bassists are the only ones who can get up to a 6x combo, which helps compensate for the fact that they don't get to play exciting stuff like guitar solos.



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Monkeys, maracas, music, and mayhem abound in Samba de Amigo for Wii.

MARACA HERO

BY CHRIS SLATE

Eight years ago, well before Guitar Hero made music games a nationwide phenomenon, arcade players and Dreamcast owners got their groove on with monkeys and maracas in Sega's Samba de Amigo. The Sonic Team-developed title was a hit, and created a passionate worldwide fanbase that's been clamoring for more Samba ever since. So, as Steve Thomason and I visited Sega's San Francisco offices to shake our groove thangs with Samba de Amigo for Wii, it crossed my mind how many rabid fans would kill me to take my place.

For those who haven't played the original version, a quick recap: similar to music games like Guitar Hero and Rock Band, you time your motions to onscreen visual cues. Blue orbs move outwards from the center of the screen toward high, medium, and low targets, and when an orb reaches a target, you aim at it with the appropriate Wii remote (left or right) and shake the makeshift maraca in time with the beat of the music. Periodically, you are prompted to strike a pose by holding the remotes on two different targets. Samba de Amigo's simple, addictive gameplay, catchy Latin beats, and funky-monkey visuals make it a perfect multiplayer party game.

THE TRACKS

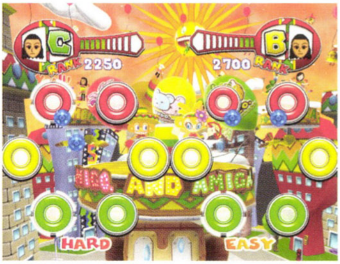
The final game will feature over 40 songs, but these are the only ones we know of so far:

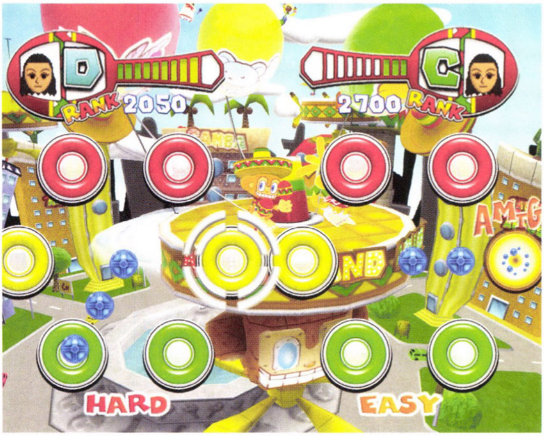
"Macarena"
"Cup of Life"
"Hot Hot Hot"
"Samba de Janero"
"La Bamba"
"Theme From Rocky"
"Low Rider"
"Conga"

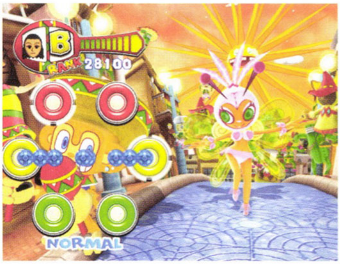
A PACKED PARTY

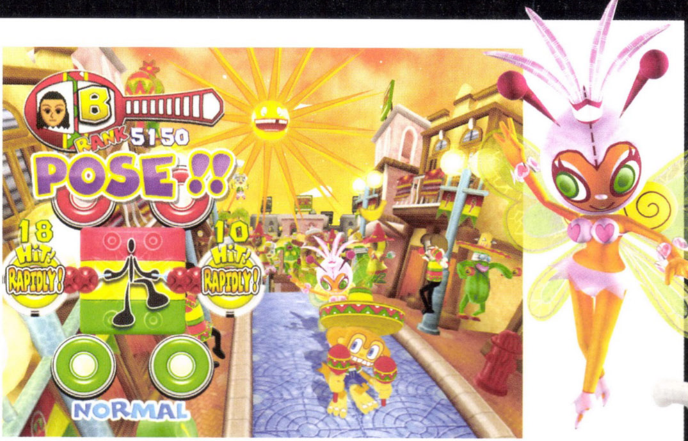
Samba de Amigo for Wii is loaded with features and modes, including nearly everything that was packed into the original Samba and its Japan-only sequel, Samba de Amigo Ver. 2000. Career mode replaces the Challenge mode found in the previous games. Here, extra songs can be unlocked by completing stages while meeting special requirements. For example, you may be asked to clear a level with a certain grade, rank, or number of Amigos (successive hits). You can challenge songs normally in Classic mode, where you play a third song if you complete the first two, and in Survival mode you keep playing until your health fully depletes (by missing beats). Minigames have returned from

Samba for Wii offers all of the same awesome weirdness of its predecessors, including the creepy voice-over guy who says, "Presented by Sega. Heh heh."



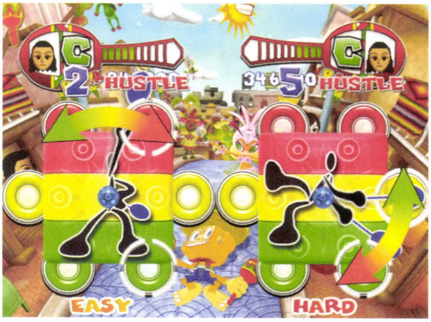






Samba and Ver. 2000 and all sport an island look to match the game's tropical new 3-D interface. In these fun diversions you'll be tested on how many poses you can strike in a minute, you'll play volleyball by pointing the Wii remote to move an onscreen hand, and even take swings at a piñata. You can also compete with a friend for the top score in the regular game, or build up bombs to attack your opponent in Battle Mode. If you're feeling friendly, Love Love mode lets two people play cooperatively. Finally, rounding out this long list of modes is a training option, a records screen, and online leader boards via Nintendo WFC.

Best known for World War II shooter Brothers in Arms, developer Gearbox Software is exchanging their guns for maracas.

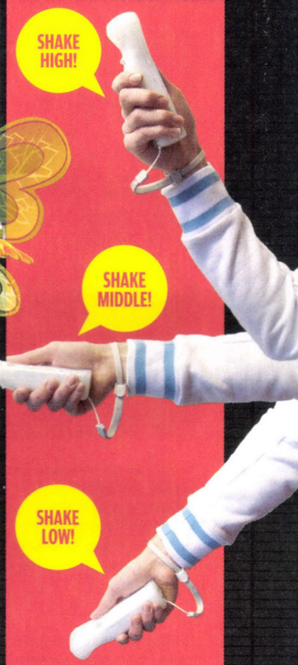


THE MUSIC

Sega won't reveal too many of the game's 40+ songs just yet, although we did manage to squeeze a few tracks out of them (see sidebar). Half of the songs will be new to the series, while the other half will come from the original Samba and Ver. 2000. With many more tunes to sort through than before, the developers have included a new wheel-type

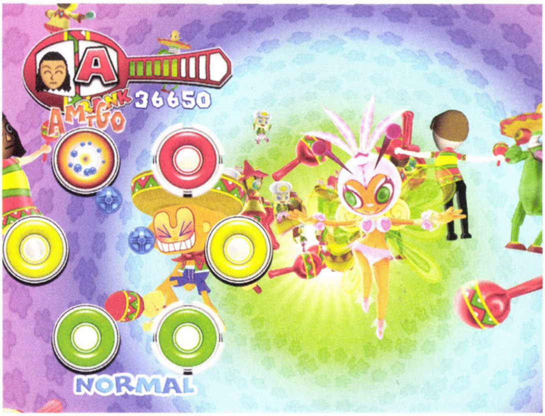
A
RANK 594950
127
AMIGO
NORMAL

The sun looks so happy. And why not? Everybody loves Samba de Amigo!

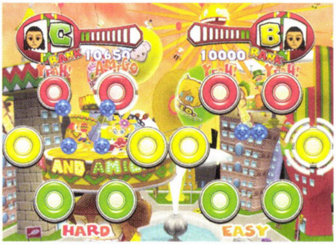

SHAKE HIGH!
SHAKE MIDDLE!
SHAKE LOW!

SHAKE THOSE MARACAS!

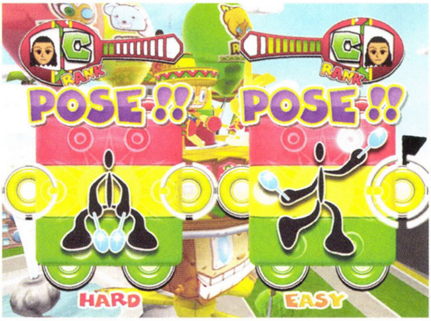
Samba de Amigo is one of the first games to support the use of two Wii remotes (although a remote + nunchuk option is also included). While holding the remotes level (with the A Button facing up), you shake them while aiming toward the screen to hit middle targets, down for low targets, and up for high ones. The remotes rumble and emit sounds with each shake, making them perfect pretend maracas.



B
RANK
42700
NORMAL



Depending on how vigorously you feel like shaking your groove thing, Samba offers four difficulty levels.



interface for quick browsing. Each song can be played in two styles: Original and Hustle. The latter type (introduced in Ver. 2000) is much more active, mixing in many new poses that require you to swing your arms.

LOCO LOCATIONS

The Samba games are known for having vibrant, heavily animated stages, which look better than ever on Wii. All of the character and background graphics have been totally redone to take advantage of the extra power that Wii has over the Dreamcast. The lighting has also been improved, and shadows have been added. There are new dynamic camera angles and Miis have been mixed in with the partying crowd on each level. We got to see the new versions of the street stage from the original game and Maraca City from Ver. 2000, and they do look much better. There are eight stages in total: three from the first Samba, two from Ver. 2000, and three new areas.

GOING HANDS-ON

After our heads had been sufficiently stuffed with info during Sega's demo, Steve and I each grabbed a pair of Wii remotes to finally play the game. The producer stressed that the development team at Gearbox Software is working insanely hard on getting the controls just right, with the goal being to match or exceed how the original Samba handled. In fact, the controls have received a major overhaul since our last hands-on in V. 223. Samba plays just fine with one Wii remote and a nunchuk—the game even shrinks the movement range to accommodate the restrictions imposed by the attaching cable. Still, two remotes are definitely better than one. In addition to freeing you up for flashier moves, each remote rumbles and emits a shaking sound to simulate a real maraca. To play, you point the remotes toward the TV for midrange shakes, up for high shakes, and down for low shakes. It works well, although you do have to train yourself a little in how to make certain movements. For example, you must be sure to stop shaking while moving between different directions or the remote will have trouble figuring out what you're doing. In the short time that I played, I struggled a bit with my aiming on the faster-paced tunes, but Steve rocked his maracas like a pro. The game isn't yet a perfectly smooth experience when you first start playing, but the controls for the Dreamcast Samba also took some getting used to and the Wii edition is still being tuned.

It's looking like fans will finally get all they've wanted and more when Samba de Amigo hits Wii this summer. Like many of today's top music games, Samba should be just as fun for causal gamers as it is for the hardcore, and it's sure to convert a whole new generation of players into monkey-loving maraca maniacs.

BONGO BONGO

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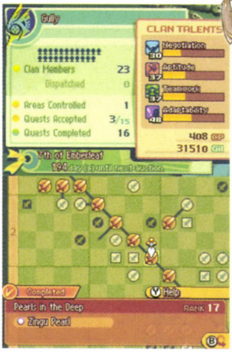
TACTICAL STRIKE

The sequel to Final Fantasy Tactics Advance comes exclusively to DS.

BY KAISER HWANG

The move to DS means more—and cooler—special effects.



Gully

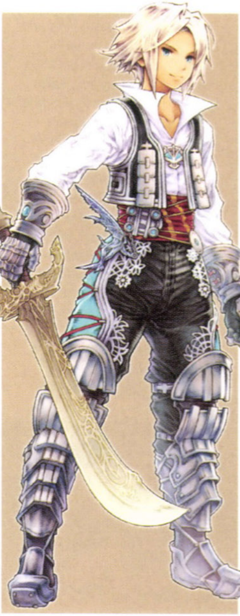
Clan Members 23
Dispatched 0
Areas Controlled 1
Quests Accepted 3/15
Quests Completed 16

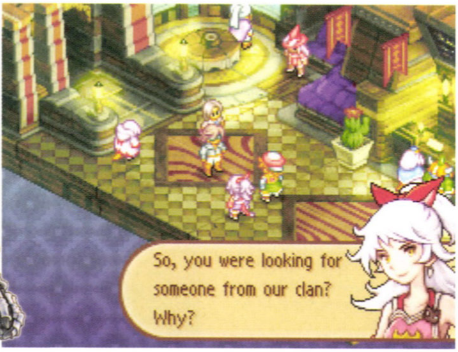
CLAN TALENTS
Negotiation 30
Aptitude 37
Teamwork 37
Adaptability 48

408 CP
31510 Gil

7th of Emberleaf
194 day(s) until next auction

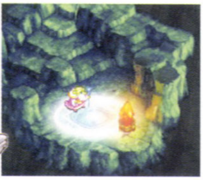
Pearls in the Deep RANK 17
Zingu Pearl





So, you were looking for someone from our clan? Why?

[Above] Bright and colorful sprites are complemented by charming character portraits and a fun tale of action and adventure. [Left] Vaan and Penelo from FFXII make guest appearances.



Every Final Fantasy game has unique quirks and idiosyncrasies that define its place in the franchise's long history—but only a few transcend the usual sequel or spin-off pizzazz, standing the test of time as something much greater. The seemingly niche **Final Fantasy Tactics** is one of them, still wooing gamers into its grasp with some of the best turn-based strategy gaming on the planet.

Final Fantasy Tactics first made waves when it was released on the PlayStation more than 10 years ago, but it didn't appear on a portable system until 2003's Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, an offshoot made specifically for the GBA. The upcoming Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift is a direct sequel to that game, incorporating much of what was left from the original's development. As noted by director Yuichi Murasawa, "It's already been roughly four years since [Tactics Advance's] release, but its short development period left us with many things we felt could be added or improved upon. We developed FFT-A2 with those things in mind."

STRATEGIC ADDITIONS

In fact, FFT-A2 in many ways feels like a more complete Tactics Advance, with strikingly similar story exposition (a young schoolboy gets sucked into the magical world of Ivalice) and overall gameplay execution (the same turn-based action and isometric view). However, changes can be found under the hood, in the form of more balanced gameplay, plus a few other aspects.

Take for instance the Judge law system. "We heard a lot of feedback from Japanese players of the original FFT-A, and introduced 'Recommended' laws to that game when making the localized versions for North America and Europe," explains Murasawa. "For FFT-A2, we've taken it a step further, making it much easier for the player to decide whether they wish to uphold the law or not."

A unique auctioning minigame, spawned off of the ability to conquer and control areas by winning battles in the world, is also included. Winning an auction helps speed you on your way to high-end weapons and items, so there's a clear benefit to controlling regions and participating in the auctions. Additionally, a new bazaar system—taken almost directly from Final Fantasy XII—is integrated into the game, allowing players to find and acquire weapons and items before they're sold in stores. By simply selling off your loot in stores, you'll eventually unlock goods much quicker than waiting for them to appear on sale.

FFXII lends this game much more than just its bazaar system. "Hitoshi Sakimoto, who composed the music in both FFXII and FFT-A2, wrote us several variations of pieces from FFXII to underscore important elements from that game and provide a sense of musical continuity in the world," reveals Murasawa. And don't think the leap from PlayStation 2 to DS has made those pieces any less moving—FFT-A2 is one of the finest examples of the DS's sonic capabilities, from the opening piano piece to the raging battle hymns to the subtle ambient chatter of the pub crowds.

THE DS DIFFERENCE?

We hoped that the Tactics series' move from the GBA to the DS would mean a bit more graphical flair for FFT-A2. Instead, it sticks to the bright and colorful sprites of the previous game, with sparse use of whiz-bang graphical effects—fitting for the light and playful tone of the story, but a little disappointing given Square Enix's history of high-production-value remakes and updates of legacy titles.

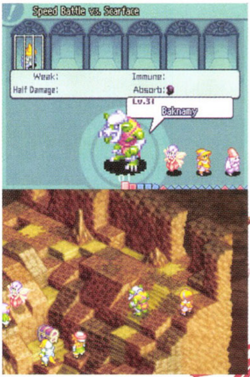
We'd also hoped for a more marked improvement in the overall user interface and presentation, especially given the added real estate of the DS's second screen. For instance, we can't help but feel a better balance could've been reached between the two screens: in battle, the top screen is used to show turn order, any Judge laws, and which character is currently selected. The bottom screen can become overwhelmingly cluttered with overlapping characters and half-screen-sized character portraits. Similarly, the staggering number of menus to navigate can be unintuitive, though helpful features like the store dressing rooms (which show in real time how a shop's items alter a character's stats) help minimize the constant back-and-forth navigation.

The Japanese version of FFT-A2 does not support any touch controls. "This is because the features and systems in the game were based on those that appeared in earlier installments of the series, developed for hardware that of course didn't have touch-screen functionality," explains Murasawa. "We thought there might be problems arbitrarily adapting these systems to work with the stylus, and there was also the issue of added development costs, so we decided against it."

Extra development time for the US and European versions has allowed Murasawa and his team to actually go back and add in touch functionality, though the results feel half-baked. There isn't anything you can do with the stylus that can't be done quicker and easier using the standard Control Pad and face buttons. At least the extra development time also gave birth to a few exclusive campaign quests, though details regarding these are still a mystery.

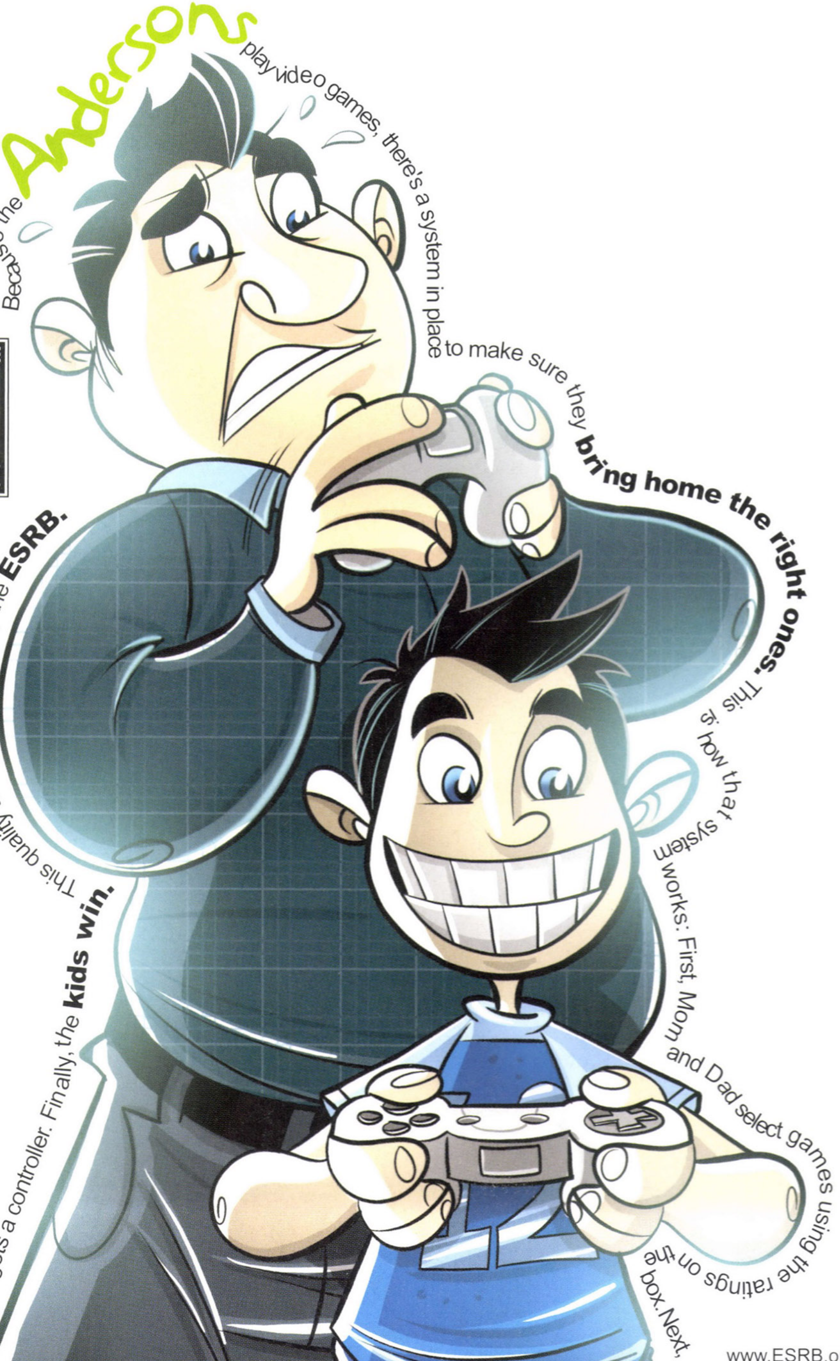
All of that being said, we admit that we're simply nitpicking. Sure, the touch controls are disappointing, but considering the fact that the game was originally made *not* to have them, their inclusion doesn't hamper the experience at all. According to Murasawa, a good turn-based strategy game is one that is "accessible to players of all skill levels and abilities, is enjoyable and fun to watch even when it's not the player's turn, provides meaningful feedback for the player to assess the results of their actions, and enables the player to improve through their own efforts." Based on those criteria, FFT-A2 seems as perfect as they come. We'll find out for sure when the game is released in June.

Join our clan now if you care to live. I hardly need spell out the alternative.



The top screen shows the battle order and other useful information.

Remember to space your party well, as magic attacks can hit more than one tile at once. Also, while beating baddies is important, keep an eye out for treasure, too.



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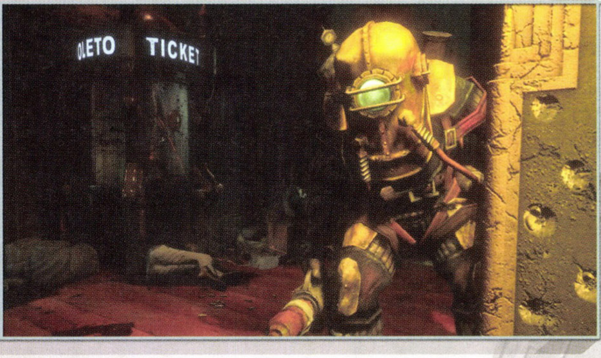
OLETO
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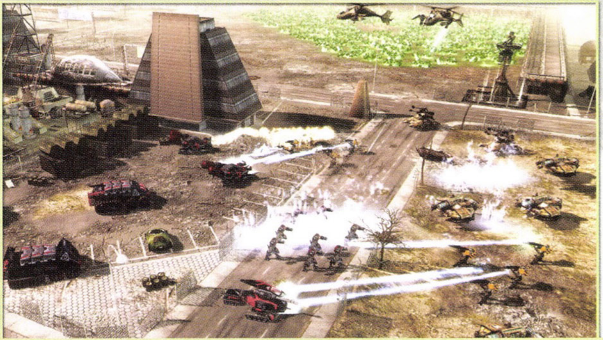
DEMOS

MODS



PATCHES

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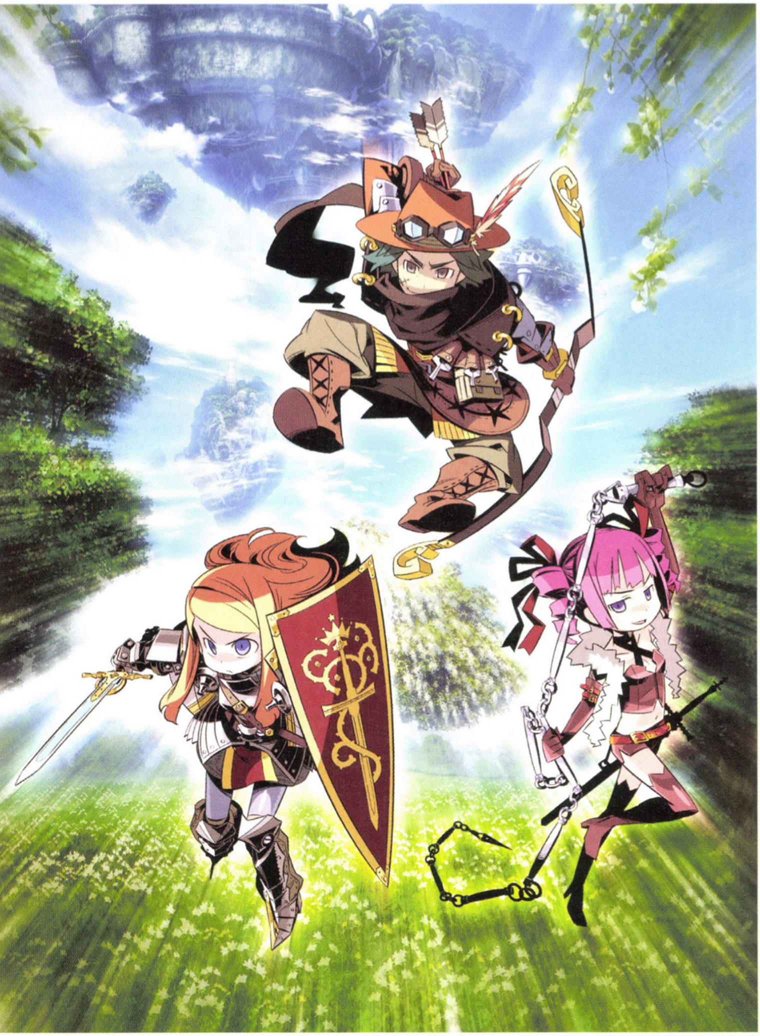
G.KNOWLEDGE.

NEW TREE, OLD THRILLS

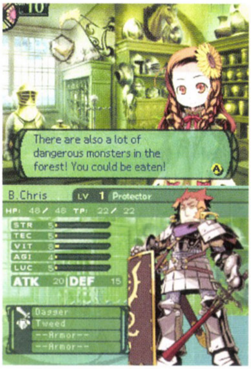


A 30-level labyrinth full of old-school charms and challenges made Etrian Odyssey a cult RPG hit. Now it's time for Etrian vets to lease a new guildhouse and journey to a new arboreal deathtrap in Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard.

In the golden age of computer RPGs, classic franchises like Wizardry, Bard's Tale, and Might & Magic looked and played a lot like Etrian Odyssey. But the genre evolved toward mass-market tastes, bringing us to the current era of RPGs packed with user-friendly automap systems, save points at every boss, and a party of characters with preset skills and personalities. Such changes seemed like progress at the time, but they came with unseen costs. Gone was the satisfaction of sketching out a graph-paper map, the tension of knowing that an hour of gameplay was at stake in each tough boss fight, and the nerdy joys of building your own characters and crafting an elaborate backstory for each. The developers of Etrian Odyssey succeeded in restoring those long-forgotten thrills, and won enough fans in the process to build a promising new RPG franchise.

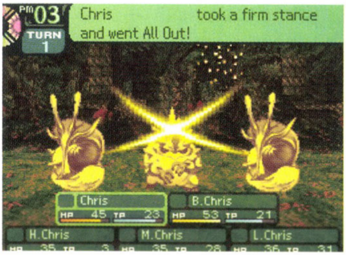
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard maintains the retro ethos of the original, but does make a few concessions to those who were put off by the original's clunky

BY CASEY LOE



There are also a lot of dangerous monsters in the forest! You could be eaten!

am 10
B.Chris LV 1 Protector
HP: 48/ 48 TP: 22/ 22
STR 5
TEC 5
VIT 5
AGI 4
LUC 5
ATK 20 DEF 15
Dagger
Tweed
--Armor--
--Armor--



Chris took a firm stance and went All Out!

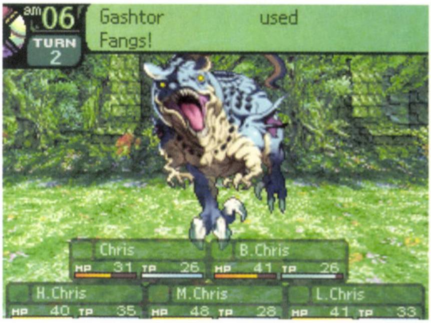
pm 03
TURN 1
Chris HP 45 TP 23
B.Chris HP 53 TP 21
H.Chris
M.Chris
L.Chris

Take this parchment. It is blank now... but someday you will fill it with the forest's secrets.

D.Chris cast the Frailty Curse!

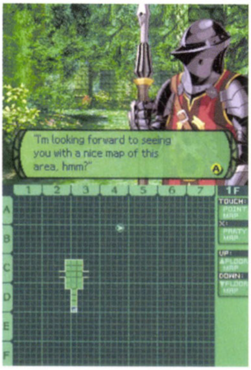
am 10
TURN 1
Chris HP 45 TP 20
B.Chris HP 2 TP 19
D.Chris HP 33 TP 23
L.Chris HP 35 TP 29
M.Chris HP 33 TP 24

[Below] The first FOE sits peacefully in the center of the map, content to provide a fatal life-lesson for newbies who approach it. On higher floors, the FOEs bring the learning to you.



Gashtor used Fangs!

am 06
TURN 2
Chris HP 31 TP 26
B.Chris HP 41 TP 26
H.Chris HP 40 TP 35
M.Chris HP 48 TP 28
L.Chris HP 41 TP 33



"I'm looking forward to seeing you with a nice map of this area, hmm?"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
A B C D E F
1F
TOUCH: POINT MAP
X: PARTY MAP
UP: ▲FLOOR MAP
DOWN: ▼FLOOR MAP

interface and needless repetition. There are now warp points within each five-floor stratum—not merely at the beginning—which cuts down on much of the backtracking. There's also an interrupt-save feature, so players on lengthy dungeon forays will never again need to race against their DS's dwindling battery life. The "rest" feature that allows you to redistribute a character's skill points has had its cost reduced to a five-level penalty, making it a lot easier to redeem a badly made character or simply experiment with different skill trees. And finally, there are tons of interface improvements, including several new map icons, the ability to strafe from side to side, and a new shop system that allows you to see before you buy new gear how your characters' stats will be affected. These refinements promise to make Etrian Odyssey II a far more pleasant experience, but don't think that Atlus has gone soft on you—the challenges have grown greater still.

Fee, Fie, FOE...Run!

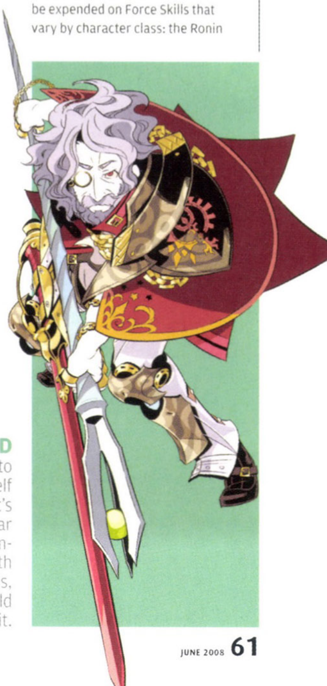
The Yggdrasil labyrinth in the new setting of Lagaard is every bit as tough as the one in Etria, and in some ways even tougher. The rock stars of Etrian Odyssey were enemies known as FOEs, cool-looking bosses that roamed most floors of the labyrinth and were powerful enough to brutally slaughter any party that couldn't get out of their way. (And oddly, fans loved them for it—do a YouTube search on "IOSYS" and "FOE" to see what I mean.) The number and variety of FOEs has only increased in Heroes of Lagaard, and they're even harder to evade—some FOEs can now disappear from your map or walk through walls. Careful scouting and precise character movements are no longer enough; you'll need to use abilities and items that can lure FOEs toward you, or stop them in their tracks so you can get through certain areas without a fight. And just to make the FOE encounters all the more unpleasant, you don't even get experience points for beating them anymore—your only reward for victory (outside of an item or two) is that long, sweet sigh you'll earn from surviving a close brush with death.

Use the Force, Landsknecht!

There are several new tools that will give you a fighting chance against EOII's new breed of super-FOEs. The mostly pointless Boost system of the original Etrian Odyssey has been reborn as the Force system, which works similarly but is far more powerful. The Force energy you accumulate in combat can now be expended on Force Skills that vary by character class: the Ronin

THE ONE THEY CALL DR. FEELGOOD

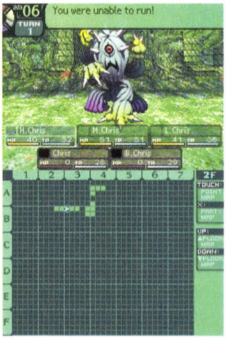
The War Magus cut med school the day he was supposed to take the Hippocratic oath, and he has since devoted himself to doing as much harm as good. He has most of the Medic's healing skills, but can fight with a sword in the front row, wear heavy armor, and use a series of attacks that do extra damage or bind the limbs of enemies that have been inflicted with status conditions. He can also cast single-target buff spells, and he has an ability that works just like the Medic's old Immunize—but it'll cost you a full Force-energy bar to cast it.



delivers a devastating attack, the Dark Hunter sticks a foe with all three Bind conditions, and the Medic completely heals the party's wounds and status conditions—even reviving the dead. These powerful abilities can be a lifesaver in FOE battles, but they can also get you killed if you let them tempt you into getting in over your head—I can't tell you how many times a full Force bar has lured me to an untimely death when the Force-user was cut down before his skill could trigger.

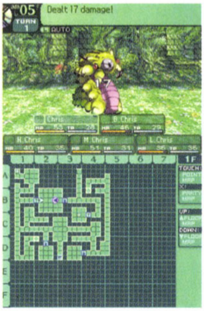
There are three additions to Etrian Odyssey II's character-class roster: War Magus, Gunner, and Beast. It won't be easy to find room for them in your five-man party, but Etrian Odyssey veterans who are tired of the straightforward Medic, Alchemist, and Protector classes will find these to be suitable and interesting replacements (see the sidebars for details). All of the previous title's character classes have also returned and are initially selectable, but have been tweaked extensively. Each class's strongest and weakest skills have been rebalanced or removed completely, and each class has been given a handful of new skills to play with. These small changes have big repercussions: Since veterans can no longer rely on previously overpowered skills like Immunize and Relaxing, they'll have to discard their old boss strategies and experiment with other skills to find a new generation of tricks hidden within the skill trees. (Here's a hint—check out the Dark Hunter's heavily enhanced Climax skill. Wow.)

One of the most intriguing aspects of Etrian Odyssey II is how well the new classes work with existing ones. The Gunner provides more targeted binding skills that you can use to set up Dark Hunter Ecstasy combos, and a team with a War Magus and a Hexer can build effective combos around any status condition—say, have your Beast inflict Terror on a foe, have the War Magus drain the Terror victim's HP with Fearcut, and then have your Hexer order it to finish itself off with the Suicide skill. Only time will tell if such fancy combos will be as effective as traditional boost/attack/heal strategies, but they're certainly more fun.

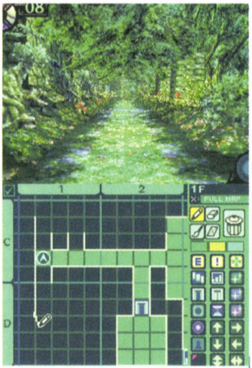


You were unable to run!

Welcome! Huh? I haven't seen you lovelies around. Did you just come into town?



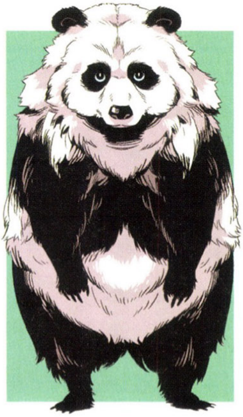
Dealt 17 damage!



[Right] New paint colors, map icons, and an expanded map-drawing area kick the DS's cartographic capabilities up a notch or two.

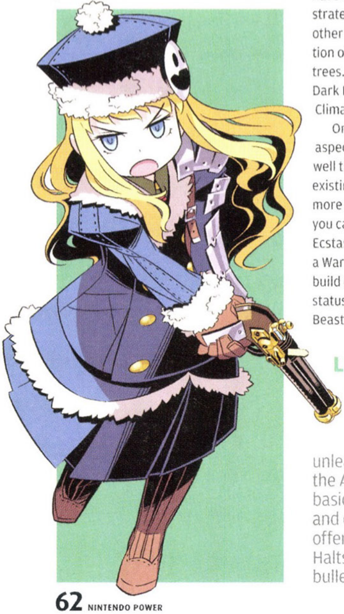
EVERY GUILD NEEDS A MASCOT

The Beast is a loyal, faithful friend—perhaps to a fault. Its prerequisite Loyalty skill compels it to dive in front of attacks meant for other characters, putting it in harm's way constantly. Fortunately, it can recoup its lost HP with a variety of self-healing skills (including one that puts it to sleep in the middle of combat, Snorlax-style). In battle, the Beast is a front-row fighter first and foremost, but it does have a bit of range—it can forage better than Survivalists and its face-lickin' Force Skill offers the best healing in the game. Visually, the Beast comes in wolf, tiger, grizzly, and panda flavors.



LIKE ALCHEMY, BUT WITH BULLETS

The Gunner is a back-row character that feels like a cross between an Alchemist, a Survivalist, and a Dark Hunter. With the right combat skills, her gun can inflict damage of any element, bind any body part, or unleash a flurry of attacks at an army of foes. And unlike the Alchemist, the Gunner can do heavy damage with the basic Attack command—especially if she's maxed her 2-Hit and crit-boosting Weakshot skills. The Gunner isn't purely offensive, though; she can stop FOEs in their tracks with a Haltshot and even cure status conditions by firing Medishot bullets at allies!



Lagaardian Odyssey

Despite the name, Etrian Odyssey II doesn't take place in Etria. In the world of Etrian Odyssey, gargantuan labyrinths literally grow on trees, and another thirty-floor maze has sprouted in the duchy of High Lagaard. Instead of plunging into its depths, you'll be climbing up, in search of a floating castle that is rumored to have acted as a Noah's ark for a lost civilization. The stand-alone quest makes Heroes of Lagaard a fine place for series newcomers to start, but Etrian Odyssey fans who were hoping for some continuity can still find it by entering the password they earned for beating the first game. That password will unlock new dialogue and quests that tie directly back to Etria, but you'll need to get cracking—Etrian Odyssey II will be here in June, and that damn password is nearly 100 characters long.

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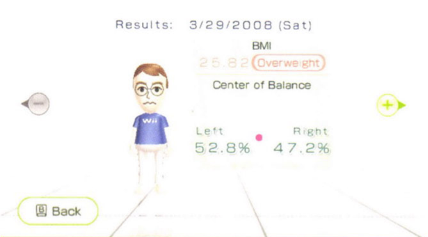
HEALTHY LIVING THROUGH GAMING

by Steve Thomason

We all know that **Wii Fit** is Nintendo's next big thing for the casual audience. And with one of the company's biggest marketing campaigns of the year behind it, the game is sure to sell like hotcakes (hold the syrup). But what about us? Can this innovative piece of software pry hardcore gamers from Super Smash Bros. long enough for us to get off the couch and do some exercise? NP's Steve Thomason chronicles his first two weeks with Wii Fit as he puts the game through its paces. (Or is it the other way around?)



Results: 3/29/2008 (Sat)

BMI

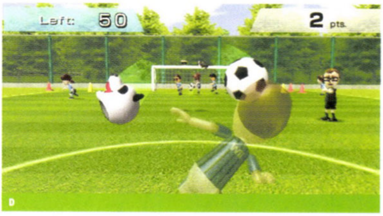
25.82 Overweight

Center of Balance

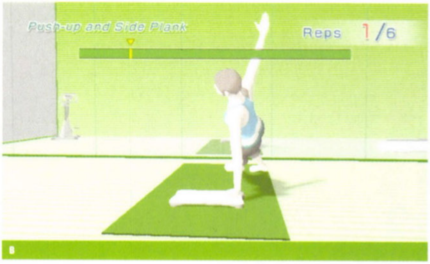
Left 52.8% Right 47.2%

A

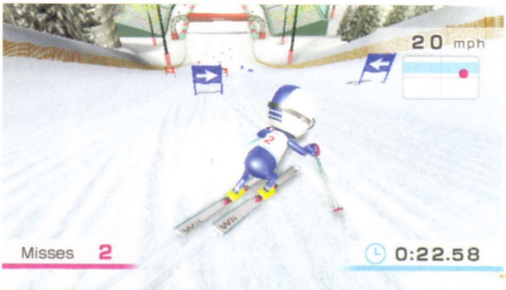
C



D



B



E

A
B
C
D
E
6AM
12PM
6PM

DAY 1

OK, here we go. It's been about five years since I last did anything that could reasonably be considered exercise, so this may prove the most painful video game feature I've ever written. Let's boot up the game. A talking Wii Balance Board is welcoming me to Wii Fit (and sorta creeping me out). First I need to import my Mii and create a profile. The sentient Balance Board spends a little time discussing the importance of posture then blames lack of exercise and unbalanced lifestyles on the worsening postures of today's population. In other words, we're getting fat and weak, and his machine brethren will soon be taking over.

Now it's time for my initial body test. After telling the game how tall I am and how heavy my clothes are, I simply stand on the board for a few moments. The results are in and...surprise, surprise—the video game magazine editor is overweight. I'm 6'3" and weigh just under 208 lbs., giving me a body mass index of 25.82 **(A)**. An ideal BMI is around 22, so I've definitely got some work to do. Let's set a goal of losing five pounds in two weeks. The game recommends a maximum of three pounds per two weeks to avoid a weight rebound, but screw that. I'm in it to win it!

Time to choose a trainer. I'm going with the female—her voice is nice and calming. Next I'm presented with a Fit Bank, which stores the credits I earn to unlock new activities. But the bank looks like a pig! Is this game making fun of me? Fine; let's throw down. I've got four basic categories to choose from—yoga, strength training, aerobics, and balance games. Why don't we kick things off with a little yoga? First I'll try the Half-Moon pose. I keep my feet firmly planted, with my hips to one side while stretching my arms overhead to the opposite side. My trainer informs me that my legs were a little shaky and gives me two stars out of four. I'll take it. I get similar results in the Warrior and Tree poses. Moving on to strength training. Some single-leg extensions, torso twists, lunges...hey, I'm not feeling too bad. Maybe I'm in better shape than I thought. Next up, push-ups with side plank: I do a push-up, then as I come up I shift my weight to one side of the body and twist to that side while bringing one arm up toward the ceiling **(B)**. Oh my god this is hard! I think I'm going to have a heart attack! That's enough for today. I need to go lie down.

DAY 2

Well, I've spent the better part of 12 hours today sitting on my ass for a fantasy baseball auction then watching WrestleMania XXIV while eating a pizza **(C)**. Not exactly the fast track to a trim waistline. To compensate, I'll add an extra five minutes to today's workout and mix in some aerobics. Hula Hoop has me holding my arms in the air and rotating my hips for 60 seconds, occasionally tilting to the left or right to catch additional hoops. Basic step aerobics proves what I've long suspected—I'm out of shape *and* have terrible rhythm.

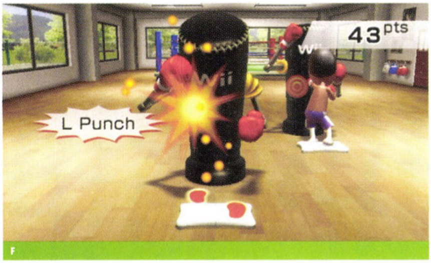
DAY 3

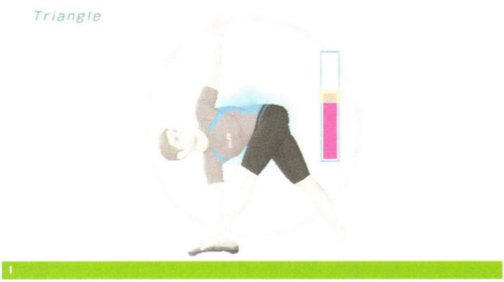
Here's the deal. It's Opening Day in Major League Baseball, so I had to skip this afternoon's workout to watch my Minnesota Twins defeat the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. Then Seattle played a really tight game with Texas, and I just couldn't pull myself away. Hey, don't look at me like that. It's the great American pastime. If I don't watch, the terrorists win! And I'd rather be a flabby patriot than a well-toned traitor!

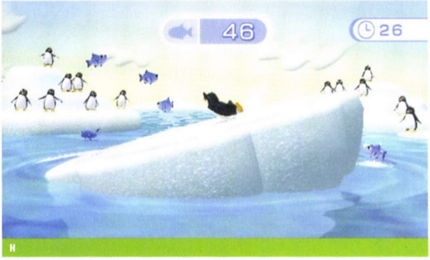
DAY 4

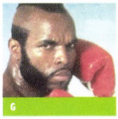
I think I'll warm up today by trying some of the balance games. First is Soccer Heading. As various objects are flung at my Mii's head, the idea is to shift my weight to the left or right to hit the soccer balls and avoid everything else **(D)**. I'm lucky my poor Mii hasn't suffered a concussion, because I'm really not very good at this—my final score is one star out of four. Ski Slalom tasks me with getting down the hill as fast as possible while zigging and zagging to pass through the flags **(E)**. Another one-star performance. Bah! Let's get back to exercising. I've unlocked a couple of new yoga poses and some new strength-training activities, so I'll add those to the regimen.

Hmm...evidently that wasn't enough to make up for the laziness of the past couple of days. The scale says I've actually gained half a pound. The scale's a jerk.

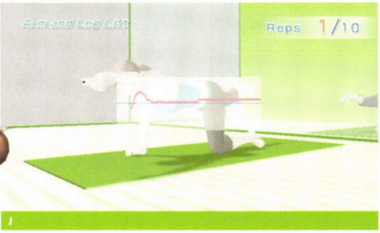








Ben & Jerry's
Stephen Colbert's
AmeriCone Dream
K



F&G
H
K
I
J
6AM
12PM
6PM

DAY 5

It's time to get serious. I'm going to start with every single yoga pose I've unlocked thus far, then add some reps to a few of the strength-training drills. Alright, I finally seem to be making some positive strides; I'm setting new personal records left and right. Things are starting to get tough, though. C'mon Steve—you can do it. Eye of the tiger. Lunges, push-ups...OK, trainer lady, you really need to shut your mouth. I know it's important to keep breathing! Just let me suffer through this in silence! I'll finish up with some aerobics and...I'm done. Let's see if I can get through the weigh-in without collapsing. Woohoo! I've lost 0.9 pounds since yesterday, bringing me to a net decrease of 0.4 pounds!

DAY 6

I'm starting to settle into a nice routine. Warm up with yoga, do some strength training and aerobic exercises, then cool down with a couple of balance games. Uh-oh. I just unlocked something called the push-up challenge—basically a contest between me and my trainer to see who can do the most push-ups. This will not end well.

I'm not sure how it happened, but I somehow managed to do 10 push-ups, at which point my trainer conceded. "That's what I get for underestimating you," she says. Darn right! Now you're playing with power! I also unlocked rhythm boxing, the first activity I've encountered that uses the nunchuk. Step forward with one foot, throw some punches in time to the music, step back and repeat **(F)**. Aw, yeah...four stars out of four on my first try. I want Balboa! I want Balboa! **(G)**

DAY 7

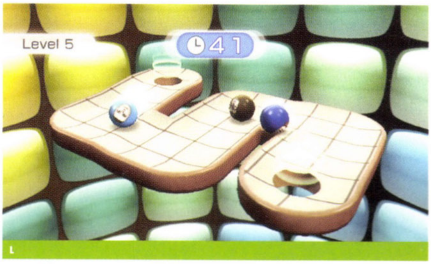
My left shoulder is pretty sore today, so I'll go easy on the arm exercises. I'm more than willing to tough it out, but I have to do what's best for the article, and rotator-cuff surgery would make for a rather dreary ending. Plus, I'll add in some extra aerobics time to make up for it. Hmmm...a lot of my yoga and strength-training scores are down from yesterday. I must be distracted by that super-awesome, top-secret Wii game I saw earlier this afternoon (look for it in next month's issue). Let's finish things up with a newly unlocked balance game—penguin slide **(H)**. With my Mii standing on an iceberg and dressed in a humiliatingly adorable penguin costume, I shift from left to right to tilt the iceberg and help him snag as many fish as possible within the time limit.

DAY 8

When I booted up the game today, the balance board told me that it's important to rest my body. Who am I to argue with my mechanical overlord? Looks like I'm taking the day off! It's a beautiful afternoon, though, so I'll go for a walk and enter the minutes into the game's activity log. I'll also do today's body test. No big change in weight, but my center of balance continues to improve.

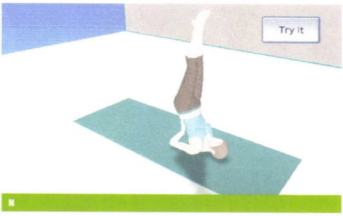
DAY 9

Just when I start to feel like I'm getting the hang of this yoga thing, the game throws a new pose at me—the triangle—that seems nigh impossible for someone of my...stature **(I)**. I've also unlocked a couple of new strength-training exercises that don't require the balance board. The triceps extension and the arm and leg lift instead gauge your results by having you hold the Wii remote **(J)**. My shoulder's feeling a lot better, so I'm stepping up the arm workouts again today. Unfortunately, my weight's back up by about a pound. And for that, I have only one person to blame...Stephen Colbert! **(K)**

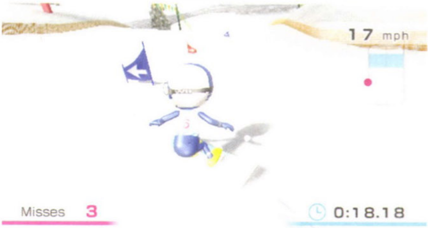


L

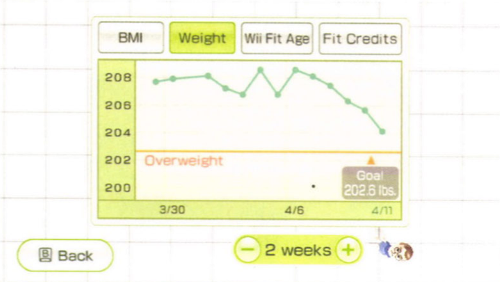
P



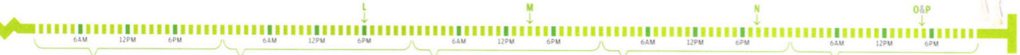
N



M



O



DAY 10

I've unlocked enough activities now that I can start tailoring each day's workout to specific areas of the body. Today I'll do legs and hips. I'm definitely starting to feel improvement. With all of the different yoga poses, I'm able to stretch further and maintain better balance than when I started. My trainer notices as well, and offers me some words of encouragement. Now I feel bad for telling her to shut up the other day.

DAY 11

Today I'm going to focus on arms and back. I've unlocked just about everything in the game at this point, and the extra variety is nice because it lets you mix things up from workout to workout. My endurance is getting better, as well; I don't feel like passing out after 30 minutes. So let's add another 15 minutes, including my first bout with advanced rhythm boxing. This level requires a lot more coordination than the basic one, and it goes for eight minutes, giving me a pretty good aerobic workout. I'll reward myself for a job well done with my favorite balance game: table tilt **(L)**. It's a little bit like Super Monkey Ball—by shifting your weight, you tilt the game board and try to lead one or more balls to the hole. Each of the balls is decorated with a Mii face, and I've noticed that Chris Slate's always seems particularly uncooperative.

DAY 12

We're coming into the home stretch, so it's time to step things up—literally. I'm swapping out basic step aerobics for the advanced version, which provides a much better aerobic workout by adding minutes, increasing the pace, and mixing in a greater variety of steps. Amazingly, my rhythm seems to be improving, though no one is likely to mistake me for James Brown any time soon. Or Shaun White, for that matter. I tried out the snowboard slalom for the first time and performed about as well as I would on the real thing (minus the broken limbs) **(M)**. It's fun, though. You turn the balance board sideways and lean back to turn left, and forward to turn right. Hopefully someone's working on a full-fledged snowboarding game that utilizes the Balance Board.

DAY 13

I unlocked the final yoga pose—shoulder stand. I'm supposed to lie on the floor, lift both legs, and stretch them back over my head, then support my lower back with my hands as I raise my lower body and point my toes toward the ceiling, supporting my weight on my shoulders **(N)**. Um, yeah...I think this one's a bit beyond me at this point. It's nice to have something to shoot for, though. The final balance game—lotus focus—is more my speed. You simply sit on the balance board with your legs crossed and see how long you can sit still.

DAY 14

Here it is—the moment of truth. Time to step on the Balance Board for the final weigh-in. My weight after two weeks with Wii Fit is...drum roll, please...a little over 204 lbs. That's a loss of about 3 lbs., bringing my body mass index down from 25.82 to 25.38 **(O)**. Not too shabby. I missed my (in hindsight ludicrously ambitious) goal, but the important thing is that I actually feel like I'm in better shape **(P)**. My balance, flexibility, and endurance have all improved noticeably, and the game definitely makes you more aware of your body. (Yes, that pizza or half-pint of Stephen Colbert's Americone Dream has an effect.)

Wii Fit may not be "fun" in the traditional sense—I'd much rather play Mario Kart than do push-ups—but I think many gamers will find it compelling nonetheless. It speaks our language—scores, credits, unlockables, etc.—and makes you feel welcome, providing excellent motivation to get off your butt and do some exercise. And I, for one, want you to lead a long and healthy life so you can continue reading our magazine for years to come. Besides, you don't want those old fogies down at the retirement home beating you at Wii Sports Tennis.

DOCTOR YOU

The DS becomes an O.R. in **Trauma Center: Under The Knife 2**, the follow-up to one of the handheld's defining games.

BY RANDY NELSON

Few situations are more surreal than sitting in your doctor's waiting room while performing life-or-death surgery by means of stylus and touch screen. It kind of makes the real-life blood-pressure check and stethoscope probing to come seem anticlimactic. And your general practitioner certainly doesn't have superhuman healing powers. Unless, that is, you're one of the dozens of critical patients treated by Dr. Derek Stiles, the dashing star of Atlus's **Trauma Center** series. Then again, that would make you a video game character, too. Talk about surreal situations.

What's very real is that the good doctor is returning to the DS in the direct sequel to Trauma Center: Under the Knife, a "surgical action game" that sounded absolutely bonkers on paper, but proved brilliant upon release, stitching together an experience that opened many gamers' eyes to what the system could do for innovation.

Trauma Center: Under the Knife was released to critical acclaim in 2005 (we gave it a 9.0) and was followed up by a Wii adaptation—aptly titled Second Opinion—for the console's US launch. After a Wii sequel called New Blood, the series is returning to Nintendo's portable for a true follow-up to the original game—although many of the characters and most of the gameplay will be familiar.

Under the Knife 2 picks up three years after the events of the first game, and 29-year-old ace surgeon Derek Stiles returns as the lead character, joined by his faithful (not to mention seriously perky, even in the darkest of moments) nurse, Angela "Angie" Thompson. Having saved the world from the GUILT virus and thwarted the terrorist group behind this ghastly bio-weapon, the duo has now been dispatched to the fictional nation of Cotigar, Africa. The country has been ravaged by years of civil war, and the game's early stages see Stiles mending refugees' broken bones and removing bullets from rebels. His experience with GUILT has made the identification and eradication of exotic new diseases a top priority for the young doctor, and it's not long before he encounters one. At this point Stiles takes another young surgeon—a member of one of Cotigar's warring tribes, named Adel Tulba—under his wing.

Before they can learn much about the mystery bug, however, players are whisked to the US by Stiles's backing group, Caduceus, to deal with the fallout from GUILT—seemingly cured patients are developing new symptoms, many cancerous, of what Caduceus is calling PGS, or Post-GUILT Syndrome. The story from this point focuses on solving the PGS mystery, treating those afflicted, and building up the confidence of Derek's protégé so he can return home and help save the lives of his people.

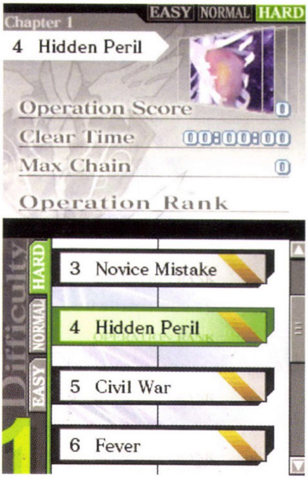
MEDICAL SCHOOLING

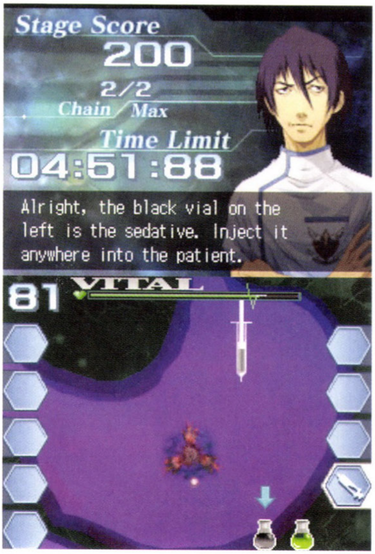
Storytelling is a key element of Under the Knife 2. There's a lot more to it than simple chitchat between operations on patients, although the latter is definitely—pardon the pun—the meat of the game. The dialog and situations are compelling, but the tense, surprising, and unique gameplay should prove to be even more so.

The sequel takes a slower, steadier pace than the original did in easing players into the role of Dr. Stiles. For one, Atlus has added the option to play on Easy, Normal, or Hard mode. (One complaint about the original game was its at-times-unforgiving difficulty.) Angie is also much better at assisting through text dialog and verbal cues throughout each operation.

Like the first game, Under The Knife 2 displays Angie and her tips on the DS's top screen, and the patient appears on the touch screen, where all of the slicing and dicing is performed using the stylus. Players are led through a series of scenarios that introduce basic concepts of incisions, extractions, disinfection,

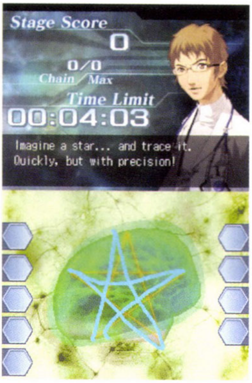
[Below] The mission select screen now shows the three difficulty settings, and players can return to any completed mission to replay it on any difficulty.



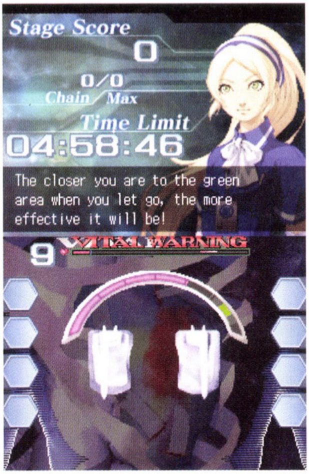


Alright, the black vial on the left is the sedative. Inject it anywhere into the patient.

[Above] The emergence of "PGS" has necessitated the creation of new life-saving drugs to use in surgery. [Right] The time-slowing "Healing Touch" is Dr. Stiles's most powerful tool, but it can only be used once per operation.



Imagine a star... and trace it. Quickly, but with precision!


Stage Score
0
0/0
Chain / Max
Time Limit
04:58:46
9
VITAL WARNING

The closer you are to the green area when you let go, the more effective it will be!

Defibrillator pads make a return. They require precise timing to jump-start a heart.

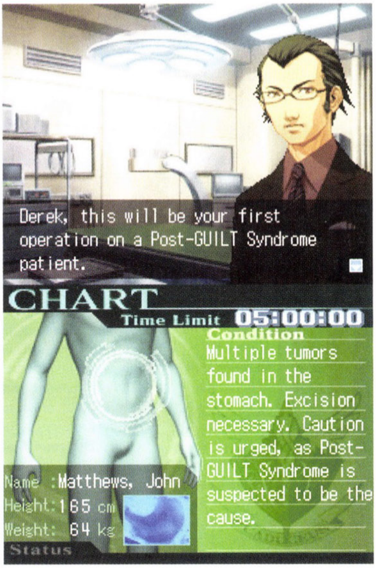
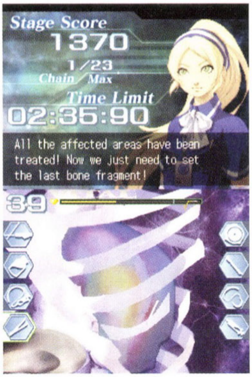


CHART
Time Limit 05:00:00
Condition
Status

Derek, this will be your first operation on a Post-GUILT Syndrome patient.

Multiple tumors found in the stomach. Excision necessary. Caution is urged, as Post-GUILT Syndrome is suspected to be the cause.

Name :Matthews, John
Height: 165 cm
Weight: 64 kg


Stage Score
1370
1/23
Chain / Max
Time Limit
02:35:90
39

All the affected areas have been treated! Now we just need to set the last bone fragment!

suturing, and other surgical standards, building up to mending broken bones (a form of match-the-puzzle-pieces play), removing tumors, and performing delicate heart surgery while patients are in cardiac arrest. (There's a minigame involving defibrillator paddles to kick-start their hearts afterward.)

As Dr. Stiles, players have a number of tools at their disposal, from basic scalpel and gauze to the sophisticated surgical laser and sonogram. In addition to "stabilizing" injection medications, the game offers up a series of specialized medicines that you must administer to patients regularly during surgery to combat the effects of PGS. The most amazing tool at the player's disposal, however, is Dr. Stiles's unique gift: the Healing Touch.

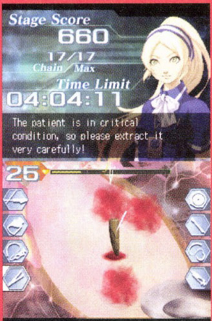
MAGIC FINGERS

Introduced in the first game, the Healing Touch is Dr. Stiles's special power that enables him to stabilize otherwise critical patients for a short period of time. It's treated like a mystical gift in the story, and, like the other medical maneuvers, it is performed using the stylus. Drawing a traditional five-pointed star onscreen unleashes the Healing Touch, and it's up to the player to decide when to use it—usually when time (and the patient's life meter) are dangerously close to running out. Given the tense pacing of the game, this happens a lot.

The first Trauma Center's frenzied tempo, combined with a large variety of ailments (some of which pop up midsurgery) and tools, not to mention a genuinely compelling story and novel stylus-driven controls, were just what the doctor ordered. Judging by what we've played so far, it seems that Under the Knife 2 is a prescription for a higher dose. We'll be dissecting the game, which hits in July, in a full review soon.

STICKY SITUATIONS

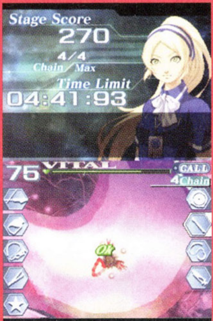
Think the doctors on *E.R.* or *House, M.D.* have it tough? Trauma Center's Derek Stiles is faced with crisis after crisis in his operating room, and very few play out like you'd expect. Just when you think the patient's saved, new complications arise. Here's a look at some of the surgical challenges that you'll be up against.


Stage Score
660
17/17
Chain / Max
Time Limit
04:04:11
25

The patient is in critical condition, so please extract it very carefully!

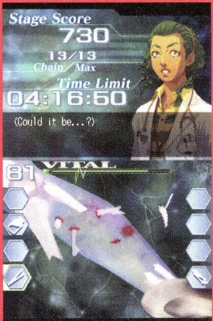
BULLET IN THE HEART

Players will be extracting dangerous new foreign objects, such as bullets, from patients.


Stage Score
270
4/4
Chain / Max
Time Limit
04:41:93
75
VITAL
CALL
4Chain

SUPER TUMORS!

These "super tumors" require multiple incisions to excise.


Stage Score
730
13/13
Chain / Max
Time Limit
04:16:50
81
VITAL

(Could it be...?)

WHEN ANIMALS ATTACK

You never know what you'll find in patients: in this case, a crocodile tooth.

HELLO
my name is
Chris

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

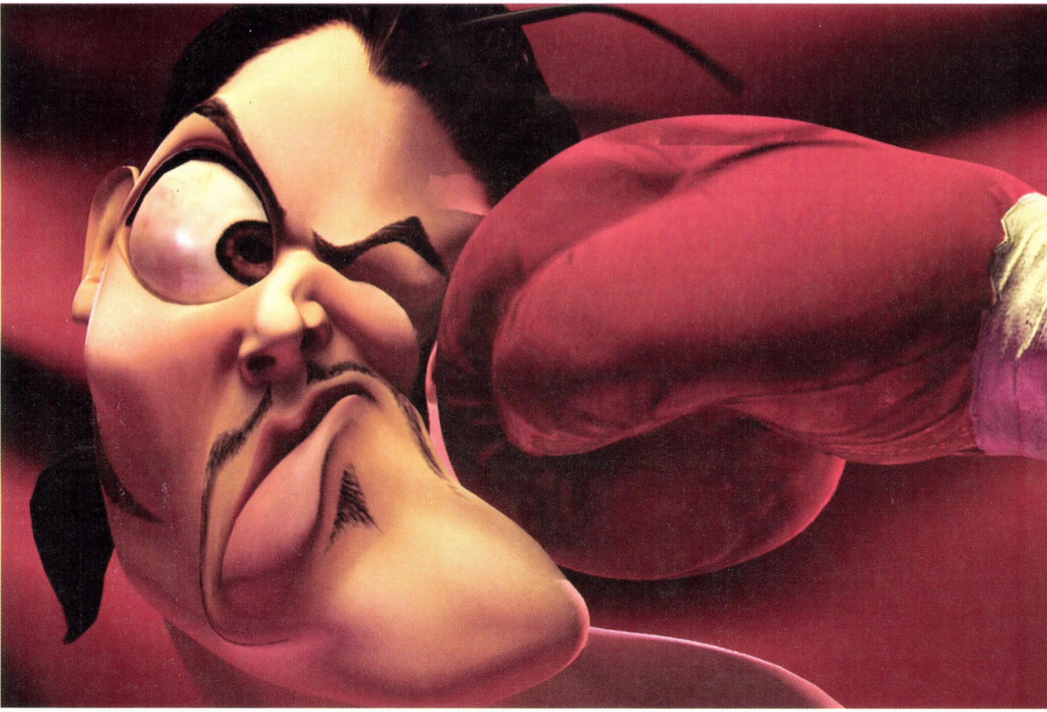
This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing video games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB rating** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

www.ESRB.org

IN YOUR FACE!

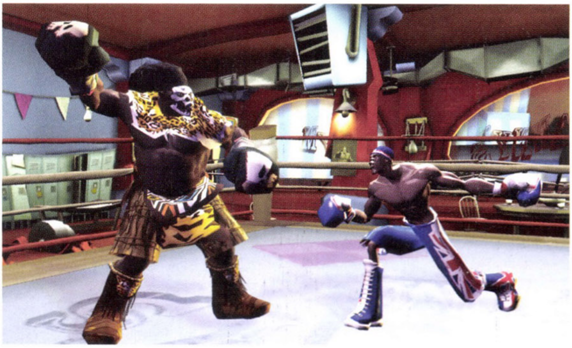
EA Sports lands a mighty blow on Wii with FaceBreaker, the next big thing in over-the-top, arcade-style boxing games.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

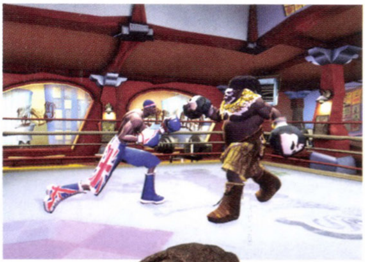


Who's the biggest name in boxing? Ali? Foreman? Holyfield? De La Hoya? Nope; when it comes to video games, those guys don't hold a candle to the likes of King Hippo, Bald Bull, or Super Macho Man. The developers at Electronic Arts recognize that even in boxing, fantasy sometimes trumps reality, which is why larger-than-life personalities, pick-up-and-play accessibility, a distinctly animated look, and liberal doses of humor are big parts of FaceBreaker, EA's first boxing game for Wii.

In an effort to create the definitive arcade-style boxing game for Wii, FaceBreaker's designers at EA Canada looked to the past for motivation. "One of our prototypes was we hooked up the original Punch-Out!! to the Wii remote, just as an inspiration," explains producer Trey Smith. "What would Punch-Out!! on the Wii feel like? And it was great. It was like playing the game [for] the first time again



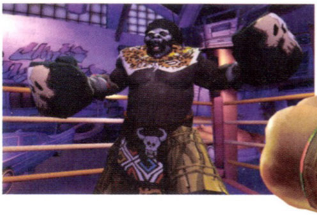
A classic match of speed versus power. Will Spin's quick fists be enough to overcome Voodoo's incredible strength? It all comes down to how you play.



with the Wii remote. And what we're hoping to deliver with this game is that feeling."

That nostalgic feeling will be partially derived from the game's 12 diverse playable characters, such as Spin (a British DJ), Molotov (a brawny Russian demolitions expert), Kekoa (a Hawaiian surfer whose name means *warrior*), Romeo (a matador/Latin lover reminiscent of Punch-Out!!'s Don Flamenco), Ice (a veteran boxer turned radio-show host), Brick (a mountain of a man who looks like the cave troll from *The Lord of the Rings*; he has a pet brick), and Voodoo (an imposing witch doctor who speaks authentic Zulu). The other fighters have yet to be fully revealed, but the cast will also include a lightning-fast female character (somewhat inspired by Street Fighter II's Chun Li), and a boxer in a straightjacket who treats his gloves like sock puppets.

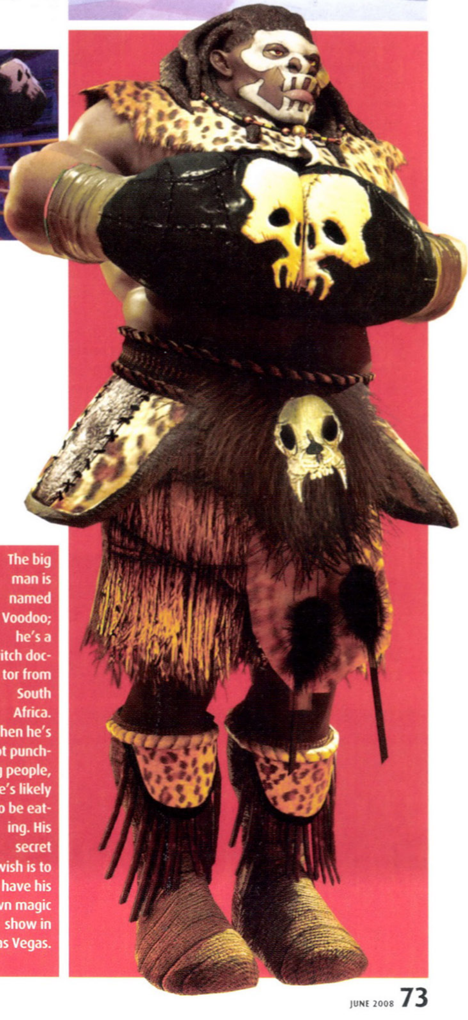
Along with their unusual personalities and distinct silhouettes, characters will have their own strengths and weaknesses—one may have stronger lefts than rights, for example, or one may be more vulnerable to body blows. They'll have individual fighting styles, as well. "Some of our characters, like Ice—he's a more precise boxer," Smith states. "So he's more textbook; he boxes like a boxer would. Just perfect, straight form. Some of our kookier characters, like Voodoo—his style's a little more mushy. He's a little slower; he throws a little heavier punches. [The female character is] really fast, not so powerful, but as soon as you turn your back...that kind of thing. Or you've got some of your heavy hitters like Brick and Molotov, where it's gonna take them a while to wind up that big punch, but when they land it, it does lots of damage."



Despite the talk of doing massive damage and breaking faces, the game isn't about violence as much as it is quirky humor and a tongue-in-cheek personality—another lesson learned from Punch-Out!! "We don't take ourselves too seriously," says Smith. "This isn't Fight Night, where it's about blood and crushing your opponent. The fact that we're calling it FaceBreaker is kind of a joke. It's kind of like what [*The Simpsons*'] Itchy and Scratchy would call a boxing game, you know?"

Greatest Hits

Although EA is bringing FaceBreaker to other systems, the Wii version is the only one that will feature gesture-based controls to pull players into the game. The control specifics are far from final—the game doesn't come out until late fall—but the obvious basics are in place; you'll throw left and right punches, respectively, by swinging the nunchuk and remote, and you'll move your boxer around the ring



The big man is named Voodoo; he's a witch doctor from South Africa. When he's not punching people, he's likely to be eating. His secret wish is to have his own magic show in Las Vegas.

using the Control Stick. Beyond those basics will be plenty of moves (some gesture-based, some likely button-initiated) to provide a deep boxing experience—high and low jabs with both fists, powerful charged punches, devastating haymakers, a stun mechanic, a blocking ability, and a parry that allows you to charge a punch while blocking, then counter with extreme force.

"It's not just [about] running to the middle of the ring and swinging at each other," Smith shares. "There's going to be some strategy involved. There are dashes so your character can kind of dash in and throw a punch. We're definitely looking at having some sort of throw mechanic where you can throw your opponent into the corner. We want to give the users... as many choices as possible. It's not just rock-scissors-paper. It's rock-scissors-paper-grenade-axe-candlestick-in-the-study."

Regardless of how you pummel your opponent, once you've got him or her on the ropes, it's time to unleash the mightiest move in the game—the titular FaceBreaker. "Our FaceBreaking mechanic will be tied directly to the health meter. When you have punched your opponent silly, and pushed their health bar into the critical zone, you have the opportunity to pull off your character's signature FaceBreaker Finishing Move Combo. They are the biggest, baddest, combos in the game. Not every punch in each character's FaceBreaker Finishing Move Combo is to the face...but the 'over-the-top' final blow is...and it will break your opponent's face."

The game's international cast is as diverse as it is colorful. Ice [left], Molotov [center], and Spin [right] each have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Facial Features

The controls aren't the only thing that sets FaceBreaker on Wii apart from its other-system counterparts. The game boasts a unique look that incorporates stylized character models featuring sculpted, chiseled forms and exaggerated proportions. The characters' muscles are actually more defined than in other versions of FaceBreaker, and each fighter will have exclusive outfits not found on other systems. In addition, the fighting arenas utilize a unique, cartoony aesthetic with skewed lines and a saturated color palette. Objects will be distorted, textures will be "playful," and the artists plan to inject humorous visual elements where they can. The game will include 10 arenas, ranging from the commonplace (a gym and a garage) to the bizarre (a haunted manor, a pirate's "booty cave," and an insane asylum), all offering unusual interpretations of their environments.

Equal attention has gone into the game's animation, which uses extensive motion capture for the characters' movements and attacks, as well as for their facial expressions, such as when the pugilists speak before and after their bouts. No mo-cap was used, however, for the skull-crunching facial-damage animations. Instead, those animations use a texture-blending system in conjunction with facial-bone positioning (dubbed FacePoser) that can be tuned on a scale from 0 to 100 to deliver a vast range of reactions.

"It's not like you get the same damaged face every time you punch," comments Smith, "because that's boring. It's really quality and variety. Those are the two things that were our bars when it came to facial damage. And funny! There's a fine line that we found between being funny and being absolutely grotesque. We did tests where we did 100 different faces, and we were like, 'That's funny; that's funny; *oh my god*, that's nasty. I want to throw up.' There was a lot of trial and error in finding that sweet spot with the funny and the grotesque."

While we know that EA Canada is planning to deliver a funny, responsive boxing game with memorable characters and over-the-top animation, there's still a lot that has yet to be revealed, such as what kinds of modes and features will be included in FaceBreaker. "We're going specifically for the Wii, and we intend to deliver across the board with exclusive features that are just for the Wii," Smith hints. "At the end of the day, we feel very confident in our feature set, [and] that we're going to accomplish what we're trying to go for."

At the very least, FaceBreaker will include both single-player and multiplayer modes, which the developers hope will be as fun to watch as they are to play. That, according to Smith, is a key part of rekindling that fun fighting spirit that the best boxing games are known for. "That's what this is about," he asserts. "It's about getting a group of your friends together, all hanging out, two people standing up duking it out, the other people on the couch having fun cheering you on. It's that one game that you have in the library [for]...when you have an impromptu Wii party...and I think that's what makes this the go-to boxing game on the Wii. And I hope everybody likes it."

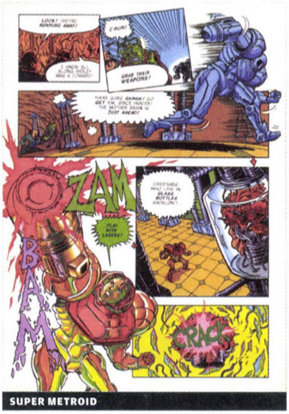
FaceBreaker features a unique visual style than combines chiseled character models with skewed, saturated backgrounds.

GIVEAWAYS
ONLINE
ENTER TO
WIN BY
LOGGING ON

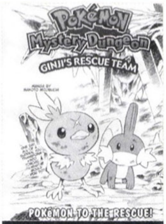
FUTURE SNOWBOARDING
ISSUE 2 ON NEWSSTANDS NOW!
FIND A SNOWBOARD
QUICK BOARD FINDER
OUR BOARD CADDY
TONY HAWK'S
LATEST NEWS
IN THE MAGAZINE
FROM THE FORUM

Your Source for Everything snowboarding...

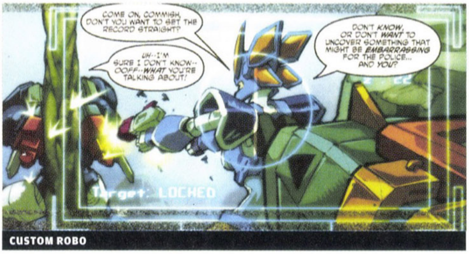
futuresnowboarding.com


LOOK! THEY'RE RUNNING AWAY!
I KNEW ALL ALONG RIDLEY WAS A COWARD!
C'MON!
GRAB THEIR WEAPONS!
THERE GOES SAMUS! GO GET 'EM, SPACE HUNTER! THE MOTHER BRAIN IS JUST AHEAD!
ZAM
BAM
FLAY WITH LASERS!
CREATURES WHO LIVE IN GLASS BOTTLES SHOULDN'T...
CRACK

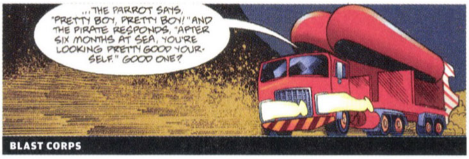
SUPER METROID


Pokémon Mystery Dungeon
GINJI'S RESCUE TEAM
POKéMON TO THE RESCUE!

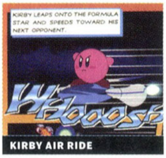
POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON


COME ON, COMMISH, DON'T YOU WANT TO GET THE RECORD STRAIGHT?
UH--I'M SURE I DON'T KNOW-- OOFF--WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
DON'T KNOW, OR DON'T WANT TO UNCOVER SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE EMBARRASSING FOR THE POLICE... AND YOU?
Target: LOCKED

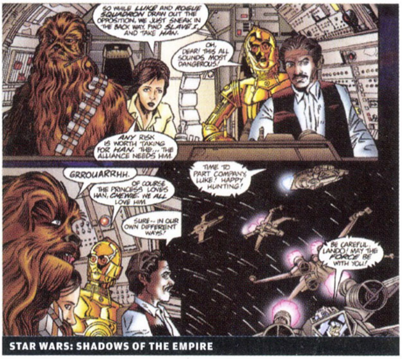
CUSTOM ROBO


...THE PARROT SAYS, "PRETTY BOY, PRETTY BOY!" AND THE PIRATE RESPONDS, "AFTER SIX MONTHS AT SEA, YOU'RE LOOKING PRETTY GOOD YOURSELF." GOOD ONE?

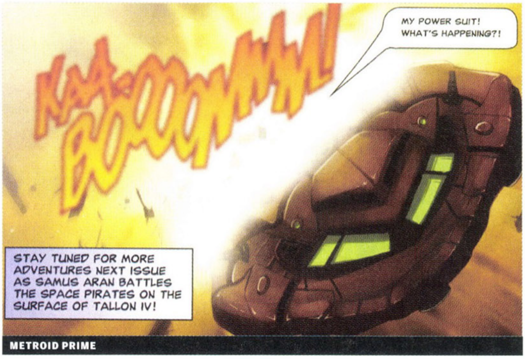
BLAST CORPS


KIRBY LEAPS ONTO THE FORMULA STAR AND SPEEDS TOWARD HIS NEXT OPPONENT.
WHOOOOSH

KIRBY AIR RIDE


SO WHILE LUKE AND ROGUE SQUADRON DRAW OUT THE OPPOSITION, WE JUST SNEAK IN THE BACK WAY, FIND SLAVE I, AND TAKE HAN.
OH, DEAR! THIS ALL SOUNDS MOST DANGEROUS!
ANY RISK IS WORTH TAKING FOR HAN. HE... THE ALLIANCE NEEDS HIM.
GRROUARRHH.
OF COURSE THE PRINCESS LOVES HAN, CHEWIE. WE ALL LOVE HIM.
TIME TO PART COMPANY, LUKE! HAPPY HUNTING!
SURE-- IN OUR OWN DIFFERENT WAYS!
BE CAREFUL, LANDO! MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!

STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE


MY POWER SUIT! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
KAA-BOOOMMM!
STAY TUNED FOR MORE ADVENTURES NEXT ISSUE AS SAMUS ARAN BATTLES THE SPACE PIRATES ON THE SURFACE OF TALLON IV!

METROID PRIME

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Power Manga-Zine

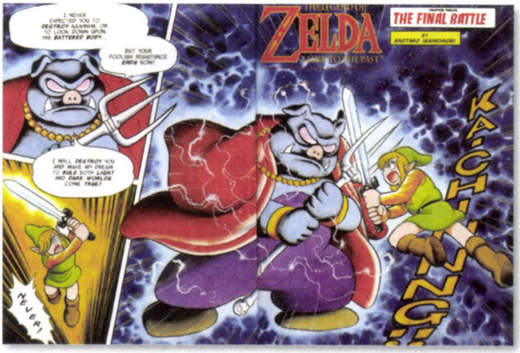
ANY NINTENDO POWER retrospective would be woefully incomplete if it omitted mention of NP's voyages into the world of comics. More than a dozen multi-issue comic series or excerpts have run in Nintendo Power's pages or as separate publications that you could pull out of the magazine, and that number doesn't even include the magazine's long-running Howard & Nester/Nester's Adventures comic series. Comics representing many of Nintendo's all-star franchises and characters, including Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Star Fox, Metroid, Pokémon, and Kirby, were obvious picks for comic serial treatment, but who would have expected Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, Blast Corps, Custom Robo, and even a Metal Gear Solid comic? The one thing that all these comics shared was a video game heritage. And since both video games and comic books were popular among young male consumers, presenting comics based on video games for NP's readers seemed to be a natural synthesis. Nintendo of America's first president, Minoru Arakawa, thought that Nintendo Power would be an ideal vehicle to introduce Japanese manga to North American readers, and many of the comics that have run in NP were indeed created in Japan. The Pokémon Mystery Dungeon comic even retained the right-to-left flow of its original Japanese format. Manga and its video-based cousin animé have since become staple art forms in North America, and perhaps some of that popularity can be traced back to Nintendo Power's readers who faithfully followed the colorful adventures of Mario, Link, and Samus each month.

BY SCOTT PELLAND

#6 IN OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NINTENDO POWER'S CLASSIC MOMENTS

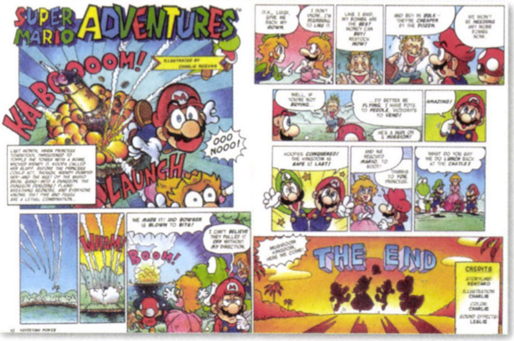
The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

Link's exploits in the Light and Dark worlds came to life with drama and humor in Shotaro Ishinomori's The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past comic, which ran in a dozen 16-page chapters beginning in Vol. 32. Nintendo Power writer Dan Owsen provided the English copy. The comic later appeared in book form, ensuring the continuing humiliation of defeated Ganon.


I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO DESTROY AGAHNIM, OR TO LOOK DOWN UPON HIS BATTERED BODY...
BUT YOUR FOOLISH RESISTANCE ENDS NOW!
I WILL DESTROY YOU AND MAKE MY DREAM TO RULE BOTH LIGHT AND DARK WORLDS COME TRUE!
NEVER!
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA A LINK TO THE PAST
CHAPTER TWELVE
THE FINAL BATTLE
BY SHOTARO ISHINOMORI
KA-CHINNNNG!!

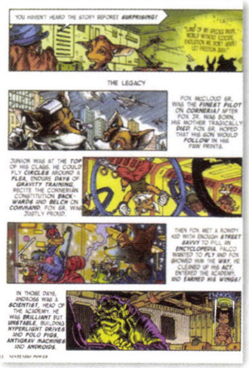
Super Mario Adventures

Running concurrent to The Legend of Zelda comic was Super Mario Adventures, illustrated by Charlie Nozawa and based on Kentaro Takekuma's story, with copy written by NP's Leslie Swan. It was one of the first depictions of the many wacky characters and goings-on in the Mushroom Kingdom. As for the concluding frame on page 63 (shown here) don't believe it; Mario and crew had several episodes left in the series.


SUPER MARIO ADVENTURES
ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLIE NOZAWA
KA-BOOOOOM!
OOO NOOO!
LAUNCH...
WHAM!
BOOM!
WE MADE IT! AND BOWSER IS BLOWN TO BITS!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY PULLED IT OFF WITHOUT MY DIRECTION.
O.K., LUIGI, GIVE ME BACK MY GOWN.
I DON'T KNOW... I'M BEGINNING TO LIKE IT.
LIKE I SAID, MY BOMBS ARE THE BEST MONEY CAN BUY! RESTOCK NOW!
AND BUY IN BULK— THEY'RE CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN.
WE WON'T BE NEEDING ANY MORE BOMBS NOW.
WELL, IF YOU'RE NOT BUYING...
...I'D BETTER BE FLYING. I HAVE POTS TO PEDDLE, VICTORS TO VEND!
HE'S A MAN ON A MISSION!
AMAZING!
KOOPA'S CONQUERED! THE KINGDOM IS SAFE AT LAST!
AND WE RESCUED MARIO, TO BOOT!
THANKS TO YOU, PRINCESS.
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE DO LUNCH BACK AT THE CASTLE?
MUSHROOM KINGDOM, HERE WE COME!
THE END
CREDITS
STORYLINE: KENTARO
ILLUSTRATION: CHARLIE
COLOR: CHARLIE
SOUND EFFECTS: LESLIE
62 NINTENDO POWER

Star Fox

I was fortunate enough to work with illustrator and game designer Benimaru Itoh on the Star Fox comic series. Creating much of Fox's backstory and adding characters such as Fara Phoenix and Herbert the android pig (he became one of our most beloved characters) made this one of my all-time favorite projects for the magazine. Who knew that Andross had a thing for polo?

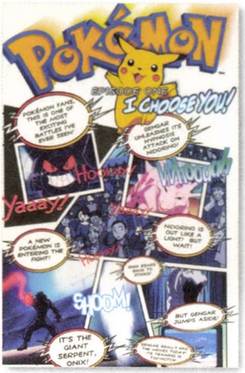

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE STORY BEFORE? SURPRISING!
THE LEGACY
FOX McCLOUD SR. WAS THE FINEST PILOT ON CORNERIA! AFTER FOX JR. WAS BORN, HIS MOTHER TRAGICALLY DIED. FOX SR. HOPED THAT HIS SON WOULD FOLLOW IN HIS PAW PRINTS.
JUNIOR WAS AT THE TOP OF HIS CLASS. HE COULD FLY CIRCLES AROUND A FLEA, ENDURE DAYS OF GRAVITY TRAINING, RECITE THE CORNERIAN CONSTITUTION BACKWARDS AND BELCH ON COMMAND. FOX SR. WAS JUSTLY PROUD.
THEN FOX MET A ROWDY KID WITH ENOUGH STREET SAVVY TO FILL AN ENCYCLOPEDIA. FALCO WANTED TO FLY AND FOX SHOWED HIM THE WAY. HE CLEANED UP HIS ACT, ENTERED THE ACADEMY, AND EARNED HIS WINGS!
IN THOSE DAYS, ANDROSS WAS A SCIENTIST, HEAD OF THE ACADEMY. HE WAS BRILLIANT BUT UNSTABLE, BUILDING HYPERLIGHT DRIVES AND POLO PIGS, ANTIGRAV MACHINES AND ANDROIDS.
12 NINTENDO POWER

Nintendo Power's Comic-ography

Battletoads	(VOLUMES 24 AND 25)
Blast Corps	(VOLUMES 97-99)
Custom Robo	(VOLUMES 184-186)
Kirby Air Ride	(VOLUMES 173 AND 174)
Kirby—Right Back at Ya!	(VOLUMES 160-163)
The Legend of Zelda	(VOLUMES 32-43)
Metal Gear Solid	(VOLUME 183)
Metroid Prime	(VOLUMES 164-166)
Pokémon (TV series one)	(VOLUMES 111-116, INSIDE POKÉMON POWER)
Pokémon (TV series two)	(VOLUMES 123-134)
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon	(VOLUMES 207-212)
Pokémon Gold Version and Silver Version	(VOLUMES 138-143)
Star Fox	(VOLUMES 45-55)
Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire	(VOLUMES 89-93)
Super Mario Adventures	(VOLUMES 32-43)
Super Metroid	(VOLUMES 57-61)

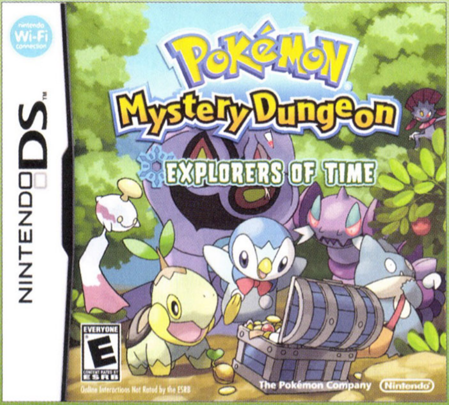
Pokémon

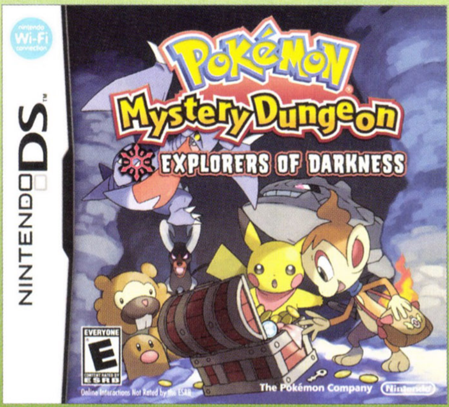
Within the 38-page Pokémon Power tear-out in our August 1998 issue, NP readers were introduced to Ash, Pikachu, and the world of Pokémon that would soon become a phenomenon. The Pokémon comics eventually went on to cover later games, such as the Gold and Silver versions, and to introduce readers to upcoming Pokémon movies.


POKÉMON
EPISODE ONE
I CHOOSE YOU!
POKÉMON FANS, THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING BATTLES I'VE EVER SEEN!
GENGAR UNLEASHES ITS HYPNOSIS ATTACK ON NIDORINO!
Hooray!
Whoooah
Yaaay!
Yaaay!
NIDORINO IS OUT LIKE A LIGHT! BUT WAIT!
A NEW POKÉMON IS ENTERING THE FIGHT!
Hooray!
ONIX REARS BACK TO STRIKE!
SHOOM!
BUT GENGAR JUMPS ASIDE!
IT'S THE GIANT SERPENT, ONIX!
GENGAR REALLY HAS THE MOVES TODAY! ITS TRAINING IS TOP-NOTCH!

NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
JUNE 2008

WINNING'S NO MYSTERY





Here's a clue: send in your entry and you may be a lucky winner in our Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness sweepstakes!

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Cartoon Violence

GRAND PRIZE

1 WINNER! Explore your inner Pokémon with a new Nintendo DS (in any currently available color) and a copy of both Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness.

SECOND PRIZE

10 WINNERS! Each second-prize winner will get to pick which new game to receive—Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time or Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness. Select wisely, young Pokémon.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V229
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than July 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about July 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes that are available for one (1) contestant are one Nintendo DS™ (of which the MSRP is $129.99), one retail copy of Pokémon® Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time (of which the MSRP is $34.99), and one retail copy of Pokémon® Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness (of which the MSRP is $34.99). The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is one retail copy of either Pokémon® Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time or Pokémon® Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness. The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

9. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Void in Vermont, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.

10. Employees, officers, and directors of Future US, the publisher or their subsidiaries and affiliated companies, and their immediate families and those living in their households, are not eligible.

11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3 x 5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v229, c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

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ARTIST	SONG	SUBMITTED BY	RATING
And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead	The Rest Will Follow	Paul M.	43 votes
System of a Down	B.Y.O.B.	GUITAR	24 votes
Willie Nelson	Black Rose	GUITAR	72 votes
Lauryn Hill	Ex Factor	Fugee Fan 97	24 votes
Our Lady Peace	4 AM	GUITAR	120 votes
Beatles	in The Life	Paul	129

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zBig Rockin' Guy - 15 Tabs 1211 votes

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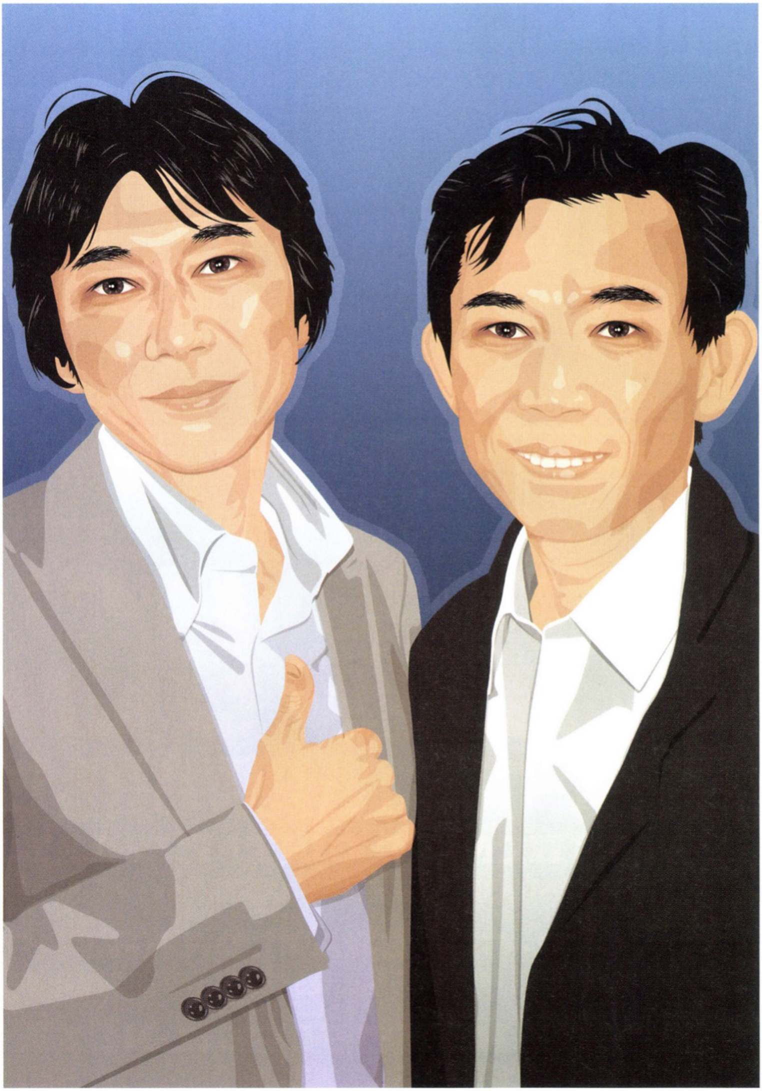
WHO'S YOUR DADDY?
GUITAR WORLD TABS

14

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
Hiroyuki:
October 30, 1957
Shugo:
September 28, 1962

BIRTHPLACE
Tokyo, Japan

POSITION
Heads of Camelot Software Planning

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating the Shining and Golden Sun franchises; being the greatest non-mustachioed brother duo in video games

FAVORITE FOOD
Hiroyuki: Sukiyaki
Shugo: Sushi

CURRENT PROJECTS
We Love Golf!

Takahashi Brothers

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

You'd be hard-pressed to find two people who love what they do more than Hiroyuki and Shugo Takahashi. The brothers in charge of famed development studio Camelot Software Planning have been making games for more than 15 years now, and their enthusiasm for their craft is infectious. Old-school Sega fans have the duo to thank for the wonderfully diverse Shining series, but Nintendo players are probably most familiar with their work on Golden Sun, Mario Golf, and Mario Tennis.

Can you tell us how you both got into the video game business?

HIROYUKI TAKAHASHI: I've always been interested in video games. When I was in my first year of college, Space Invaders came out and was becoming incredibly popular. When I first saw the game, I thought, "Wow, how could I get into this business?" But I felt that the people making these games have got to be incredibly intelligent, and there's no way that I would ever be able to make anything this amazing.

When my little brother was in elementary school, he had a computer kit; there were these kits that they sold in Japan that allowed you to build your own computer. He built this computer and was programming on it from a very young age.

SHUGO TAKAHASHI: Of course, at that time, there was no monitor associated with these computers. It was just very simple LEDs. You could make simple roulette-type games, and that was about it. After I made my first game [on this computer], I showed it to my big brother and let him play it a little bit, and he said, "This isn't any fun." [Laughs] And that pretty much ruined my interest in making games for quite a while. [Laughs]

HT: So I didn't really think that my little brother would be able to be a genius programmer. [Laughs] But, you know, he's done alright for himself as a director.

Anyway, after graduating from college, I worked in a number of industries that had nothing to do with gaming. When I was 30 years old, I saw a want ad in the newspaper for a company called Enix. They were looking for people to work on the Dragon Quest series. And I thought, well this could be a really great opportunity for me. So I answered that ad and started working at Enix. I first worked on Dragon Quest III. I didn't have anything to do with the actual production; it was more promotional work. I did PR on that game. But then, for Dragon Quest IV, I worked as an assistant producer.

After that, I created my own company called Climax. The first game that we created at Climax was Shining in the Darkness. The company's second game was Shining Force. At that time, my younger brother was working as a systems engineer—on business software and things like that—for another company. [After Shining Force], I hired him into my company as a programmer and we became Sonic Software Planning. That's when we really became a full-fledged game-production company.

ST: The first game that we made together was Shining Force for Game Gear.

When you were kids, what did you want to be when you grew up?

HT: I wanted to become a lot of different things. [Laughs] I wanted to be a comedian or a manga artist or a sports star.

ST: And I wanted to become a professional bowler! When I was nine years old, I played in an international junior tournament and I was pretty good. When I was 20, I played in some real professional matches and...I was probably better when I was nine. [Laughs]

How has the video game industry changed since you've been involved with it?

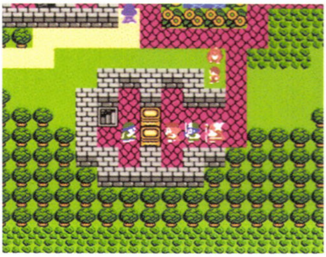
HT: First of all, I would say that the video game industry has changed a lot, but *we* haven't changed very much. [Laughs] One thing that is very different is that a long time ago, when we started making games, you could have a really small team—a small number of really, really great people working together. They could make an incredible game. And that's something you can't really do anymore. Now you have these huge, huge teams that have to come together.

Because you don't have the ability to make games with smaller teams, the thing that's disappeared is the ability to take those bigger risks. In this day and age, with the amount of money and resources put behind these bigger projects, it's much more difficult to take risks because you're not going to be able to live through failures. This business doesn't forgive failures as much as it used to. So taking a risk and making a game that you really want to make is a bit harder to do.

For example, with Shining in the Darkness, we had two graphics artists, three programmers, and myself. Six people. And that was a game that was very well received. In Japan, it sold about 250,000 copies. In America, it sold about 300,000. So it was a pretty big success for only six people. And it only took about six

GAMEOGRAPHY

Whether for home consoles or handhelds, the Takahashi brothers have long crafted some of the best RPGs and sports games available. There aren't many developers who can claim that kind of success in two such disparate genres.



DRAGON WARRIOR IV
1992, NES
HIROYUKI: ASSISTANT PRODUCER

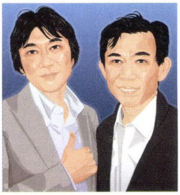
ESRB
HP 32
MP 0
LV 2
HP
MP
LV
HP
MP
LV
ATTACK

SHINING IN THE DARKNESS
1991, SEGA GENESIS
HIROYUKI: GAME DESIGN/SCENARIO

Hans L1
HP 13/13
MP 0/ 0
Dark Dwarf
HP 7/12
MP 0/ 0

SHINING FORCE
1992, SEGA GENESIS
HIROYUKI: GAME DESIGN/SCENARIO

Power Profiles



months. You just can't do that anymore.

ST: For the Game Gear Shining Force, we had only four people working on that game: us two brothers, another programmer, and a lady who worked in our office. That was it. And we made that game in three months. [Laughs] That's what it was like at that time.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?

HT: If you're talking about game design, one thing that I love is hitting upon an original idea that no one has thought of before. Something truly original.

ST: When you're making a game, there are a lot of different choices that you have to make. You don't really know which of those choices were correct until after the game is released and you get feedback from the players. And from my perspective, finding out that you made the right choices is one of the most rewarding and fun things about this job.

Can you talk a little bit about the origin and inspiration behind the Shining franchise?

HT: Of course, Shining in the Darkness was the very first of those games. The original inspiration was actually a screenshot of a computer game that we saw in a magazine. It showed a thief posing in a way that made you think it was coming toward the player for a fight. But then when we actually played the game, it was completely different! [Laughs] That was our first impression based on that screenshot, though. We're the type of people who see something and instantly imagine what it could be like. So we saw this screenshot and thought, "Oh, this is going to be great!" And then it wasn't at all like we imagined it would be. That happens to us a lot. So with Shining in the Darkness, we tried to make what we thought this screenshot was going to be.

When we were young, we didn't really read a lot of Japanese novels. We read a lot of translated, foreign science fiction and fantasy stories. We were both huge fans of that stuff growing up. So that's probably had a big influence on our games as well.

ST: We really loved to talk about those stories. We'd read them together and say, "Oh, wasn't this part great?" We'd really get into them.

HT: We also really like music that feeds the imagination.

> *"Evidently, brothers usually get in fights a lot. I guess we're lucky; we don't fight too much."*

The Shining series spanned many different types of RPGs—what do you see as the thread that ties them together?

HT: Well, first off, I think from the perspective of the game world, you should probably look at the titles from Shining in the Darkness until Shining Wisdom as one series, and then Shining the Holy Ark and Shining Force III as a different series.

ST: They take place in two different worlds. What's interesting to us is that we really felt that we made two different series, but we always hear from fans that all of these Shining games seem like they all belong together. So even though each and every game is very different in terms of how you play, it does seem like fans have this feeling that the same blood is flowing through the veins of all of these games. It's hard for us to put our finger on exactly what that is, but we understand that and we hear it a lot.

HT: One of the big reasons for the dramatic gameplay differences from title to title is the fact that we got a lot of feedback from users at the very beginning that the game world wasn't really changing that much. So we tried to move the series in new directions by making action-RPGs, strategy-RPGs, etc.

ST: What I think is great about our fans is that they don't really want the same thing from game to game. They appreciate that we're trying to do a lot of different things, and they cheer on the creative spirit that we always try to aspire to.

If the opportunity presented itself, would you be interested in making another Shining game?

HT: From our perspective, Shining the Holy Ark and Shining Force III are the two best games in the series, and we definitely feel that it would be a waste if we didn't explore those game systems more. So looking to the future, we would really love to use those systems again somehow. The game we make might not have Shining in the title, but we would love to be able to do something with them.

ST: The same goes for Golden Sun. That's one we'd love to revisit as well.

That conveniently leads to our next question! For a long time, Camelot developed a lot of Nintendo-published titles. Do you still have a relationship with Nintendo, and do you anticipate working with them again in the future?

HT: Of course; we still have a very close relationship with Nintendo.

GAMEOGRAPHY

SHINING THE HOLY ARK
1997, SEGA SATURN
HIROYUKI & SHUGO: GAME DESIGN/SCENARIO

1
PAR4
413y
HARY ±0
REST 415y
1W
216y
HIT!
99-100%

HOT SHOTS GOLF
1998, PLAYSTATION
HIROYUKI: PRODUCER; SHUGO: COURSE DESIGN

SHINING FORCE III
1998, SEGA SATURN
HIROYUKI: GAME DESIGN/SCENARIO;
SHUGO: GAME DESIGN

> *"If it weren't for Super Mario Bros. coming out when it did, I don't think that we would be in this business."*

How did your collaboration with Capcom come about?
HT: We've had a lot of respect for Capcom's games for a very, very long time. And in the past, at various events, we've talked with a lot of the top people at Capcom. There had always been a lot of talk about how we should make a game together some time. So really, it was just that the timing finally worked out for everyone.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an independent studio?
HT: Well, I'm sure a lot of people think, "Oh, it must be great to be able to make the games that you want to make!" But, you know, it's a lot of hard work! [Laughs] There are a lot of really good things about being independent, of course, but one of the bad things is that you have to take on the risk yourself. Because the teams that work on these games are part of an independent studio, if they don't make a hit, then it can be difficult to make a living. That's something that the teams have to worry about when they're making these games. But even though it can be pretty harrowing at times, we really do think that it's because we're an independent studio that we've been able to make the kinds of games that we've made, with a lot of originality and a lot of ourselves put into them. If you don't move things forward yourself, though, you're not going to be successful. So you really have to work very, very hard as an independent studio in this business.

What's it like working with your brother?
HT: We're actually really close. Of course, running a business requires you to make a lot of decisions. And rather than having to do that alone, taking those decisions and thinking about them together really makes them a lot easier on you psychologically. You can figure out the direction of the company together, and to be able to do that as two brothers has been really wonderful. I don't think there are too many business partners out there who are closer than we are.
ST: We get asked that one a lot. People always ask if we get in fights all the time! [Laughs]
HT: Evidently, brothers usually get in fights a lot. I guess we're lucky; we don't fight too much. [Laughs]

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
ST: One of the things that we always tell our staff is "never give up!" You just need to keep looking for that solution. It's got to be there. It's just trying many approaches, many different ways of doing something. One day, the light just turns on and you find something that works.
HT: It's not like God is going to come down and grace you with an answer. [Laughs] You really just have to try different things and work through it. Of course, once you finally find the solution, you say, "Oh, thank you, God!" [Laughs] Another thing you think is, "Man, I'm a genius for figuring that out!" [Laughs]

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
HT: Mr. Miyamoto, of course!
ST: If it weren't for him and if it weren't for Super Mario Bros. coming out when it did, I don't think that we would be in this business. I really don't. He's the one, right?

When we made Mario Golf, it originally wasn't going to be a Mario game. It was just a regular golf game. But Mr. Miyamoto said to us, "Why don't we set this game in the Mario world?" And that was really an incredible thing for us.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
HT: We're pretty fanatical about our music. We probably have about 5,000 albums each. So we really, really love music. [Laughs] As far as a genre, we really love what you would call classic rock. Yes, Genesis, Pink Floyd, King Crimson—that's probably our favorite genre of music.

What are some of your favorite nongaming hobbies or pastimes?
HT: We love golfing! [Laughs] We go out to the course and play a round at least twice a month. We practice at least once a week. We are huge golfers.
ST: We also love watching mixed martial arts. We were huge fans of Kazushi Sakuraba. We would always watch his matches back in the day. And we were really sad to see PRIDE go the way of the dinosaur.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
HT: I can pick only one? That's tough! Actually, there was a manga called *Elite* that I read as a young child. In it, there was a man who had ESP. And when I first started reading the manga, I really wanted that power. But then, there was this villain that he fought who was incredibly intelligent. He was basically able to use technology to do all of the things that the hero was able to do. So I really didn't know which one I wanted—to be super-intelligent or to have extrasensory powers.
ST: I think as long as I had the powers that the main character from Golden Sun had, I'd be really happy. But of course, if you could just change your Djinni, you could have any kind of power, so that's kind of cheating. [Laughs]

Isaac HP 265
Garet HP 173
Ivan HP 119
Mia HP 78

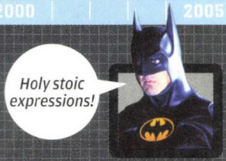
Ivan's Wind Power rises by 30!
Isaac summons Ramses!

GOLDEN SUN
2001, GAME BOY ADVANCE
HIROYUKI: PRODUCER/SCENARIO;
SHUGO: PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

13
PAR 4
PIN
177y
4W
Power

MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR
2004, GAME BOY ADVANCE
HIROYUKI & SHUGO: GAME DESIGN

MARIO POWER TENNIS
2004, GAMECUBE
HIROYUKI & SHUGO: GAME DESIGN

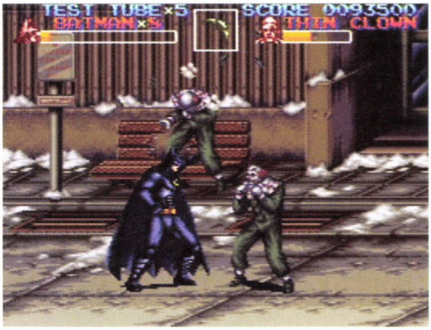

Holy stoic expressions!

BATMAN RETURNS

BATMAN RETURNS
KONAMI
SUPER NINTENDO

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
RELEASE DATE: **APRIL 1993**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **42, 48, 51**
BOSSES WITH MONKEYS: **1**

> Not all Batman games are bad—only the ones that came after Batman Returns.



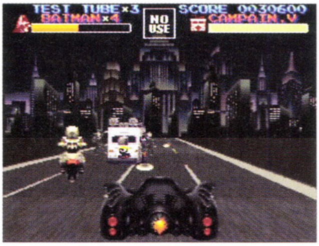
"Stop clowning around and have a seat!" There aren't any awesome one-liners in the game, so you'll have to make your own.

Batman may be one of the world's premiere superheroes, but when it comes to video games, he often comes across as a second-rate sidekick. Titles such as Batman & Robin (PS1), Batman Beyond (N64), Batman: Vengeance (GCN), and Batman: Dark Tomorrow (GCN)—to name a few—have been duds of epic proportions. An exception to this rule, however, was Konami's Batman Returns for SNES, based on the 1992 movie starring Michael Keaton, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Danny DeVito.

The game was very true to the film, featuring many of the movie's locales and characters, along with a great re-creation of Danny Elfman's score, and impressive digitized stills that told the story between levels. As great as the production values were, the action was even better. The side-scrolling beat-'em-up gameplay was admittedly on the generic side—for the most part, it could have been anyone in the starring role—but the single-player brawling was second to none. A fantastic sense of impact let you almost feel every punch, kick, and dive attack as you battled The Penguin's Red Triangle Circus Gang, and the game was packed with a wide variety of moves and cool gimmicks. By walking close to an enemy, you could grab him then fling him through a background object with a gratifying crunch, or better yet, if you grabbed two enemies, you could slam their heads together in supremely satisfying fashion. Batman's Batarangs came into play in certain situations, too. If you used a Batarang on a clown carrying a bomb, for example, he'd drop it and it would explode at his feet; if you nailed a sword-swallower while he was practicing his trade, he'd suffer substantial injury (let that be a lesson, kids!).

Varied gameplay also kept things exciting. One of the game's seven stages focused entirely on Mode 7 driving and shooting using the Batmobile, and some level segments centered on grappling via the hook on Batman's utility belt. You could even use the grappling hook to pull a concrete block onto Selena Kyle's attacker like in the beginning of the film. Numerous other movie moments were captured through gameplay, including fights against The Penguin and Catwoman.

The latest Batman flick, The Dark Knight, hits theaters in July, and as of this writing no game adaptation has been announced. But that's OK—you'd probably be better off playing Batman Returns on SNES anyway. —CHRIS H.

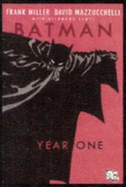


SUGGESTED READING

If you want to experience some more quality Batman, these comic collections are a good place to start.

FRANK MILLER

BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS
Frank Miller's 1986 opus helped establish the grim 'n' gritty Batman.



BATMAN: YEAR ONE
This Frank Miller-written and David Mazzucchelli-drawn graphic novel inspired the film *Batman Begins*.

ALAN MOORE
BRIAN BOLLAND
BATMAN
THE KILLING JOKE

BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE
Writer Alan Moore and artist Brian Bolland present a possible origin story of the Dark Knight's perennial foe.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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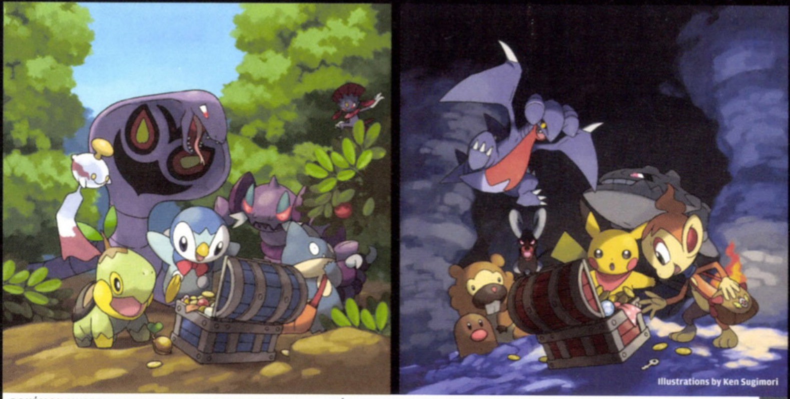
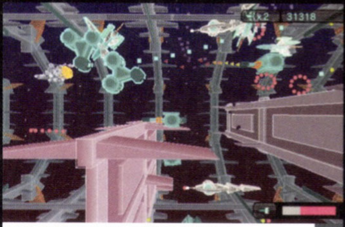
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

The wait is over–Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness are finally ready!


Illustrations by Ken Sugimori

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: EXPLORERS OF TIME AND POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: EXPLORERS OF DARKNESS 86



BLAST WORKS: BUILD, TRADE & DESTROY 90

Aldo

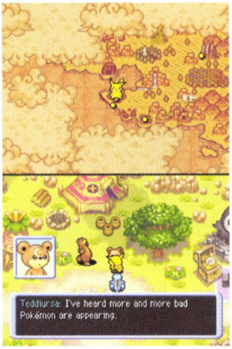
Come on, Ayn. You don't need to be all formal with us.

SUMMON NIGHT: TWIN AGE 88

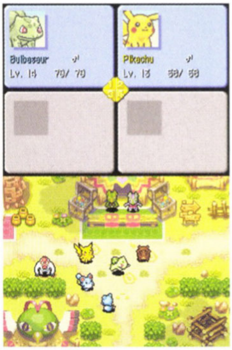
BOOM BLOX 87

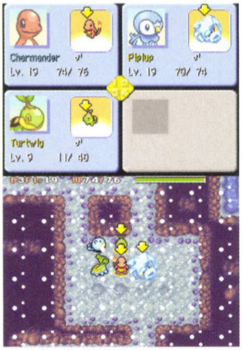
DRONE TACTICS 87

Blast Works: Build, Trade & Destroy 90
Boom Blox 87
Drone Tactics 87
Iron Man (DS) 90
Iron Man (Wii) 88
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles 89
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness 86
Summon Night: Twin Age 88
Super Dodgeball Brawlers 89
Top Spin 3 (DS) 90
Top Spin 3 (Wii) 88
We Ski 90



Teddiursa: I've heard more and more bad Pokémon are appearing.





A Familiar, but Fun, Mystery

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: EXPLORERS OF TIME

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: EXPLORERS OF DARKNESS

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The first Pokémon Mystery Dungeon games (Blue Rescue Team and Red Rescue Team) were quite the attention-getters—it was the first time Pokémon talked, and the tactics-style gameplay gave a new look to the traditional Pokémon system. Now that Pokémon fans know what to expect from the series, the new pair of titles, Explorers of Time and Explorers of Darkness, have to rely more on their merits than on pure inquisitiveness. In some ways the developers have stepped up to the challenge, while other aspects of the game aren't as much of a leap forward as I'd hoped.

The strength of the first Pokémon Mystery Dungeon was its in-depth story, and that's true of the second pair of titles as well. Explorers of Time and Explorers of Darkness exercise some creative-storytelling muscle, often taking the plot in unexpected directions. It's clear that the Pokémon-can-talk element makes for better tales, particularly because it allows the Pokémon to have their own personalities—that's a lot harder when they can say only their name. Explorers of Time and Explorers of Darkness also follow a similar narrative design to the first Mystery Dungeon pair: the primary story is less than half the game. There's a ton to do after the credits roll, including recruiting additional Pokémon and exploring more-difficult dungeons. The dungeons gain some welcome diversity after the primary story ends—early in the game if you're in a water area, you're guaranteed to face a lot of Water-type Pokémon. It'd be nice if the whole game were more diverse, as experienced gamers will cruise right through many of the early dungeons.

The first Pokémon Mystery Dungeon games were released simultaneously on the DS and the Game Boy Advance, which, while kind of a novel idea, severely hampered the DS version's potential. The graphics had to serve the lowest common denominator, making the DS game pale next to its nicer-looking peers. Now that the GBA yoke has been lifted, the DS is free to look its best, but the graphics still feel somewhat restrained. The backgrounds have more detail than in the original games, but the Pokémon themselves leave something to be desired. I'm a fan of the pixel look, but with nearly 500 Pokémon in the wild (which includes all the creatures introduced in Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl), sometimes it's hard to tell a Jigglypuff from a Spoink at a glance.

While the games add new Pokémon and an intriguing new story, the mechanics of Explorers of Time and Explorers of Darkness aren't much different from those of the previous titles. Even some of the quirky controls from Red Rescue Team and Blue Rescue Team that were necessary because of the Game Boy Advance connection still remain. Moving diagonally is a pain, and the DS's top screen could be better utilized to deliver more information. There hasn't been much expansion of the variety of items and moves that are available to your party, either.

One of the most notable improvements is the in-game menu system. Now when you look up descriptions of moves or items, hypertext-style links to certain terms pop up. For example, if you look up the Gunk Shot move and see that it causes the Poison condition, you can click on the word *Poison* to find out what that condition does. Given the increasing complexity of Pokémon games, this should be included in every new release.

Mystery Dungeon veterans will also appreciate a revamped Wi-Fi system that, while it doesn't add many new features, streamlines some of the things that were a pain to do before. Foremost, you don't have to write down Wonder Mail codes anymore—you can simply send messages to your friends wirelessly. (The old Wonder Mail method is still an option, however.) Having full Wi-Fi compatibility makes sending Wonder Mail much more worth the effort. I only wish a head-to-head mutliplayer mode had been added, too.

Explorers of Time and Explorers of Darkness are very similar to the first Pokémon Mystery Dungeon pair, so if you liked Blue Rescue Team and Red Rescue Team, you should enjoy these. If you haven't played the first games, give Explorers of Time or Explorers of Darkness a shot—you don't need to have played the earlier titles to jump right in, and the novel gameplay is worth experiencing.

WRITERS' BLOCK

FOLLOWING SPIELBERG'S BOOM BLOX, WHICH OTHER FILMMAKER WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TRY HIS HAND AT VIDEO GAMES?

Justin Cheng

I'd really like to see Danny Boyle try his hand at a game, especially if it's anything like *28 Days Later* or *Sunshine*.

Chris Hoffman

I pick anyone who's not George Lucas. I don't want to see a game about cleaning sand out of Darth Vader's hard-to-reach places.

Tom Holoien

Uwe Boll. Even if it means a terrible video game, it would be worth it to keep him from making more movies.

Casey Loe

Michael Bay's habit of using jump cuts every three seconds might actually be sort of fun in a game. Also, it would give us a temporary reprieve from his awful movies.

Chris Shepperd

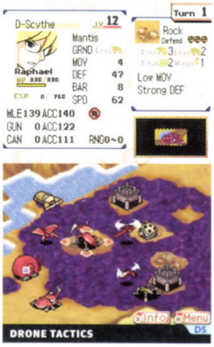
Martin Scorcese knows his way around mean streets, casinos, and gangs of New York. The worlds are already there—he just needs to make them come alive for us.

George Sinfield

Michel Gondry has lent his warped point of view to such films as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *The Science of Sleep*. He could do the same for a surreal fantasy-adventure game.

Steve Thomason

I'd love to see Quentin Tarantino play around with the narrative structure of games. Now *that* could be a tasty burger.



DRONE TACTICS

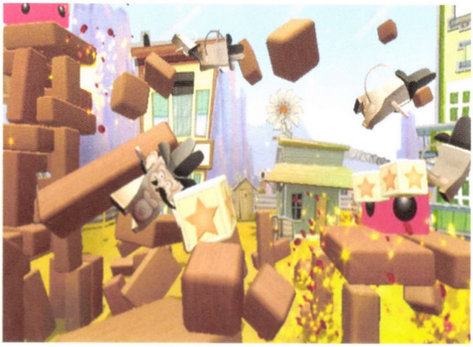
DRONE TACTICS

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

A military strategy game for preteens is a pretty tough sell, so the developers at Success didn't take any chances—they packed in everything from talking bugs and giant robots to collectible cards to appeal to their target demographic. The result is a storyline that will elicit nothing but eye-rolls and nasal snorts from anyone over 12, but the game at the core of Drone Tactics is surprisingly well-made. The 3-D robot-bug battles look cool, the idea of collectible cards with one-shot combat abilities works well, and the unit-customization options are deep and enjoyable. On the downside, the touch-screen minigames that trigger whenever you use a card grow tiresome quickly, and there are some strange spikes in Drone Tactics's difficulty curve. At least the latter problem is easily remedied by leveling up your units in an optional series of battles that can be pursued at any time.

The game's conventional strategy mechanics (think "Front Mission Lite") probably won't excite anyone who's played through a Final Fantasy Tactics or Advance Wars, but Drone Tactics does make an ideal genre primer for young players: there isn't any objectionable content, and the game introduces its mechanics gradually and clearly.

—CASEY L.



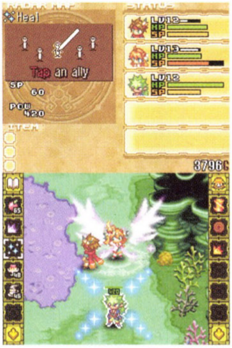
Fun with Physics

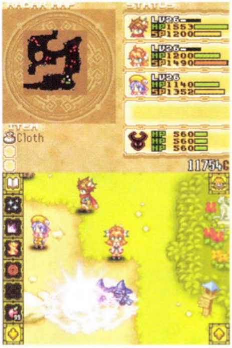
BOOM BLOX

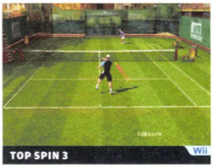
RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

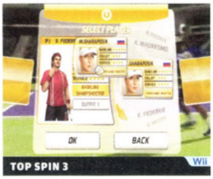
As the first product of the much-hyped partnership between Electronic Arts and Steven Spielberg, Boom Blox comes as a bit of a surprise. Given the legendary filmmaker's background, one might reasonably have expected something deeply cinematic with a strong focus on storytelling. But what we got was just the opposite: a title built entirely on compelling gameplay. Part puzzle game, part virtual toy box, this Wii exclusive is all about having fun with building blocks. And while the basic concept is simple as can be, the experience is taken to the next level by flawless motion controls, clever puzzle designs, and a truly remarkable physics engine. There's just something incredibly satisfying about watching carefully built structures topple (or blow up) convincingly. The game also boasts impressive variety thanks to lots of different block types and myriad ways with which to manipulate them. An extensive single-player offering eases you into things nicely, and though the game is definitely accessible to all ages, later levels provide a pretty stiff challenge (especially if you're trying to earn gold medals). More than a dozen multiplayer modes—both competitive and cooperative—make the game a blast to play with friends, as well. There's a lot of content on the disc, and creative types can even build their own stages using the awesomely robust level editor, then share them with friends via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. The production values aren't going to win any awards, and some of the mechanics work better than others (the hose is pretty lame), but Boom Blox is an innovative and amusing piece of entertainment worthy of the Spielberg name.

—STEVE T.






TOP SPIN 3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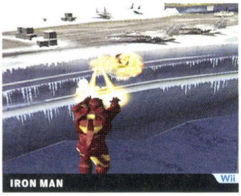
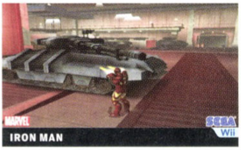

IRON MAN

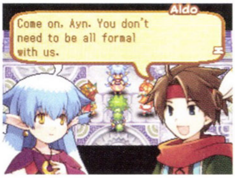

IRON MAN

Good Night

SUMMON NIGHT: TWIN AGE

RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **FLIGHT-PLAN**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

When it comes to the action portion of action role playing, Summon Night: Twin Age delivers. The top-down combat is simple, responsive, and makes perfect use of the DS's touch controls. Tapping enemies to attack and tapping or dragging on the environment to move is thoroughly intuitive; I'd even say that the character movement is more satisfying than that of The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass (well, except on the occasions when I got caught on background objects). The combat also has plenty of depth, due to a huge array of weapons, armor, accessories, special attacks, support skills, summon spells, and items, as well as two distinct playable characters that you can switch between with a simple screen tap. Excellent hand-drawn anime-style graphics, quality voice work, and an intriguing story help round out the package. But while the presentation and combat are wonderfully robust, other aspects of the game are very shallow; in fact, there really isn't much else to it. There are no towns, tools, or puzzles, and almost every dungeon follows the same predictable pattern. The game has some AI issues, too: some bosses can be incredibly cheap (they become invincible for extended periods while charging up brutal special attacks), and sometimes my CPU-controlled partners refused to heal or attack, even when our friendship levels were maxed out. It's also unfortunate that there's no co-op mode—since you're always accompanied by a partner, it would have been an ideal addition. Despite room for improvement, Summon Night is quite enjoyable; what it does, it does very well. Players looking for a more well-rounded fantasy adventure, however, will have to conjure up something else. —CHRIS H.



TOP SPIN 3

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **PAM DEVELOPMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

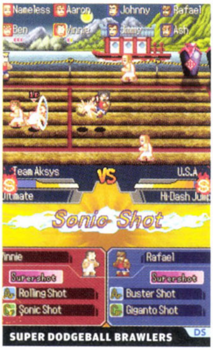
Although I'm not the biggest fan of the real sport of tennis, I like tennis video games quite a bit. It's the one-on-one (or two-on-two) competition that I enjoy, besting my opponent with a wicked smash or a well-timed drop shot. But I also like a little variety with my tennis—some minigames to help keep things fun and interesting. This is where the recent Sega Superstars Tennis excelled and where Top Spin 3 falls short. Top Spin 3 is all tennis, all the time. Even the wild-and-crazy-sounding party games are essentially basic tennis matches with slightly different winning conditions.

If you're a devoted fan of straightforward tennis, you'll likely enjoy the game. There are 27 players to choose from (sadly, you can't create your own character), and the tennis itself is solid for the most part. You move your character with the Control Stick and swing your racket with the Wii remote. Interestingly, you turn the Wii remote sideways, putting your index finger over the B Button, with the top of the remote acting like the face of your racket. The speed and power of your shots are determined by how fast you swing the remote, and you can direct your shots with the Control Stick. Unfortunately, since you're continually swinging the remote like a real racket, playing the game for long periods feels like it could potentially give you real-life tennis elbow. —JUSTIN C.

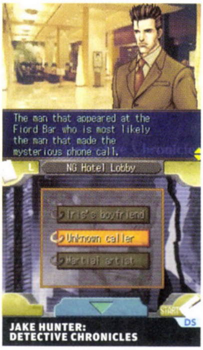
IRON MAN

RATING: 5.5
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **A2M**
ESRB: **TEEN**

If you're expecting Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" to play somewhere in the Wii game of the same name, you won't be disappointed—the song kicks in during the first level, when Tony Stark makes his action-packed escape. If you're expecting this to be more than the average licensed game, though, you'll be a bit let down. It's not that Iron Man is *bad*—it's fun to use the Wii remote to point and shoot at your enemies for the first few levels, but it becomes repetitive as you progress through all 13. At least the voice acting by the upcoming movie's actors adds authenticity, and the unlockable comic-book costumes are a nice touch for die-hard fans of the Iron Man comics. —JUSTIN C.



SUPER DODGEBALL BRAWLERS DS



The man that appeared at the Fiord Bar who is most likely the man that made the mysterious phone call.

JAKE HUNTER: DETECTIVE CHRONICLES DS

SUPER DODGEBALL BRAWLERS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**

DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS**

ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Dodgeball games have certainly developed a niche appeal over the years. There's no doubt the titles are fun, but their fans seem to keep buying the same game over and over—nothing significant ever gets added to improve the franchise. The trend continues with Super Dodgeball Brawlers, which feels mightily similar to the ones before it. A few tweaks to the formula, such as a bit of RPG-style leveling up and the ability to kick your opponent when he gets near the center line, are enough to warrant giving the game a second look, but they don't have a great impact on the overall experience—in particular, the effects of character building are almost imperceptible. The title could use a serious graphical overhaul, as well as a better utilization of the DS's capabilities. The touch screen is used only to activate special powers, which, sadly, don't do much. And the microphone isn't utilized at all. Why not let us shout formation commands to our team, for example? Dodgeball fans won't be disappointed with Brawlers, but if you've been waiting for something new to bring you back onto the court, the wait continues. —CHRIS SH.

JAKE HUNTER: DETECTIVE CHRONICLES

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **DS**

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**

DEVELOPER: **WORKJAM**

ESRB: **TEEN**

"No one is ever truly happy at the end of a case," proclaims a cut-scene in Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles. That's certainly true in this graphic-text adventure, which left me demanding an investigation into its numerous flaws. Although the serious tone and mysterious premises held my attention (especially since they offer a nice change of pace from similar games on DS), they're kept in check by dull characterization, inconsistent art, and typo-filled writing. The stories lack interesting twists and turns, and there's no sense of danger—you can't lose. The game would have benefited from some compelling touch-screen use (for puzzles or combat, perhaps), but as is, it barely puts the "interactive" in "interactive novel." —CHRIS H.

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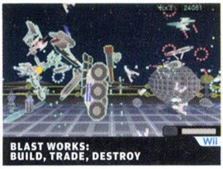
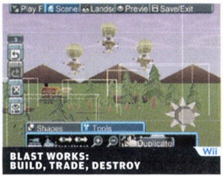
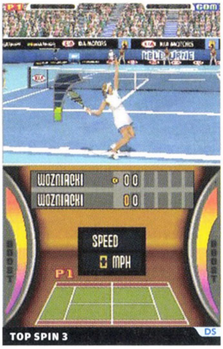


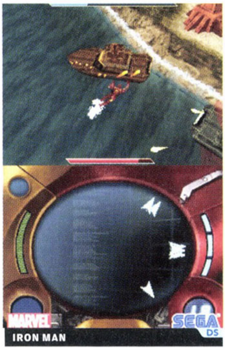
BLAST WORKS: BUILD, TRADE, DESTROY Wii



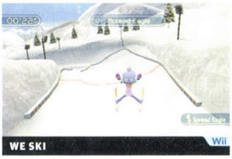
BLAST WORKS: BUILD, TRADE, DESTROY Wii



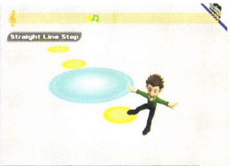
TOP SPIN 3 DS



IRON MAN DS



WE SKI Wii



DECA SPORTS Wii

BLAST WORKS: BUILD, TRADE, DESTROY

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **BUDCAT CREATIONS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It's not often that a game surprises us with genuinely unique and innovative gameplay, but Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy has done just that. The hook: when you defeat an enemy you can ram your ship into the wreckage, which will then stick to you and fire its weapons automatically on your behalf. These additional pieces also serve as shields, which is useful because a single hit is enough to destroy you. You can hide your parts by holding a button, allowing your ship to slip between enemy bullet patterns, but also leaving you defenseless, so strategy and timing are essential if you want to beat all 15-plus levels.

Blast Works is a remake of a freeware computer game called Tumiki Fighters released in 2004 by Kenta Cho, an independent developer. In addition to nicer (though still basically polygonal) graphics than the original, Blast Works features an enormous editing mode, where you can create your own ships, levels, and even bullet patterns, and then trade them with others online. One of our complaints is that this editor is actually *too* comprehensive. It offers little in the way of assistance, making you build everything one piece at a time, but with enough patience and creativity the possibilities are endless.

As homage to Mr. Cho, the original Tumiki Fighters and three of his other games (Gunroar, Torus Trooper, and rRootage) are included on the disc as unlockables. Though Blast Works may seem small and simple at first, the deceptive gameplay depth plus the editor and the ability to trade your designs with others online means there's no end to the fun. —TOM H.

TOP SPIN 3

RATING: 6.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **PAM DEVELOPMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Concerns about graphics and frame rate in Top Spin 2 for the DS have been addressed successfully by new developer PAM in the follow-up. The game's tour stars and legends move smoothly and are quick to reach the ball. They are also able to execute a wide variety of shots, but the problem is that the bulk of shots land squarely in the middle of the opposing side of the court, even when the attempt is to hit the ball into a corner. Volleys are often long, but human players usually lose the war of attrition versus CPU opponents. Training minigames help players improve stats, so progress can be made even when matches are difficult to win. —GEORGE S.

IRON MAN

RATING: 5.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **A2M**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Instead of your typical third-person shooter, Iron Man on DS is more like Jungle Strike or Urban Strike on SNES. You might think that having a 360-degree shooting radius would make the game easier, but that's offset by the fact that you can be shot by enemies offscreen. Upgrading your weapons and armor improves matters, and shooting everything in sight has its charm, but the fact remains that flying, walking, and shooting are all you ever do. Additionally, there's little reason to come back to the game once you've beaten it, other than to shoot some more in the One Man Army survival mode. —JUSTIN C.

WE SKI

RATING: 6.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

One thing we can say for sure about buying We Ski is that you'll get what you pay for: a cute, fun ski game that can be played with the Wii Balance Board. That is, however, the extent of it. The game sometimes has trouble reading your movements accurately when you're using the Balance Board, but you do have the option of using just the remote and nunchuk to play, which is a lot easier to handle (though it kind of defeats the purpose of the game). It does support up to four players, and the minigames are enjoyable, so if skiing is your thing We Ski is worth a look. —TOM H.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Hudson's **Deca Sports** is one of the better multievent sports games for Wii. It offers 10 different activities, from soccer to kart racing to ice skating, all with responsive, easy-to-understand controls. Curling is especially fun.... **Speed Racer**, based on the movie, is coming to Wii and DS from Warner Home Video Games. Race at high speeds and fight using Car-Fu with more than a dozen characters.... Another movie tie-in, **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian**, is also headed to Wii and DS courtesy of Disney Interactive. You can play cooperatively and control loads of characters in the Wii version, and the DS version lets you connect to Disney's DGamer community.... **Commando: Steel Disaster**, from XS Games, is on its way to DS. We haven't had a chance to play the final version, but the shoot-'em-up action looks like a blast.

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LUCKY NUMBER SEVEN

Last issue was brought to you by the number seven. Five games earned a 7.0, while one game (Okami on Wii) earned a 7.5. Remember: these scores don't mean the games are bad at all—they're at least worth a rental, and fans of the games' genres may really enjoy them. Most of the other games scored lower, but there were two major highlights: Mario Kart Wii (9.0) and Square Enix's The World Ends with You for DS (9.0). Mario Kart Wii has become something of an obsession for art director Chris Imlay; he plays it almost every day at lunch.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
Baroque	3.0	Atlus	227	T
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Battle of the Bands	7.0	THQ	228	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Bomberman Land	5.0	Hudson	226	E
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bully: Scholarship Edition	8.5	Rockstar	227	T
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Castle of Shikigami III	7.0	Aksys	228	T
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	7.0	THQ	227	T
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	7.0	Square Enix	226	T
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	Southpeak	228	E10+
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
Emergency Mayhem	N/A	Codemasters	228	T
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return	7.0	Sega	227	M
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Jumper	N/A	Brash	226	T
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore	N/A	Konami	226	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
• Mario Kart Wii	9.0	Nintendo	228	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6.0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	6.5	Aksys	228	E
MLB 2K8	6.5	2K Sports	227	E
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
No More Heroes	8.0	Ubisoft	226	M
Obscure: The Aftermath	7.0	Ignition	227	M
Octomania	N/A	Conspiracy	227	E
Okami	7.5	Capcom	228	T
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Opoona	7.0	Koei	227	E10+
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	7.5	Crave	227	E10+
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4.5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Sega Bass Fishing	5.0	Sega	227	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E10+
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Spider-Man 3	6.0	Activision	217	T
Summer Sports: Paradise Island	3.5	Destineer	228	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
• Super Smash Bros. Brawl	10	Nintendo	226	T
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Target: Terror	N/A	Konami	227	M
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
Wild Earth: African Safari	N/A	Majesco	228	E
Worms: A Space Oddity	6.0	THQ	227	E10+

REVIEWER NOTES

BAROQUE

Baroque can be infuriating thanks to unclear goals and poor overall structure, but I can't agree with Tom's harsh assessment. Like most random dungeon crawlers, its level design is awfully dull, but the real-time combat is solid, the voice acting is awesome, and the horror theme is unique. If you're not a fan of the genre, though, this won't change your mind. —CHRIS H.

MARIO KART Wii

While the pantywaists that make up the rest of the editorial staff have reverted to playing MK Wii with the GCN controller, I've steadfastly stuck with the Wii Wheel. Sure, I may be losing every race, and the peripheral feels like it was designed for little baby hands, but at least I'm playing the game the way it was meant to be played.

—STEVE T.

RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

This Wii-exclusive title is a fantastic light-gun-style shooter with more content and hours of playtime than perhaps any other game of its type. The story fills in a lot of gaps for longtime series fans, but you don't have to be a Resident Evil expert to enjoy the simple pleasure of blasting zombies with a buddy. —CHRIS SL.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
WWII Aces	3.0	Destineer	226	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	226	T
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	7.5	Ubisoft	226	T
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Brain Voyage	N/A	Eidos	228	E
Bratz: Super Babyz	N/A	THQ	226	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
Crosswords DS	N/A	Nintendo	228	E
Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru Densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	Southpeak	228	E10+
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	6.5	Hudson	226	T
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	7.0	Square Enix	226	E10+
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvest Moon DS Cute	7.5	Natsume	226	E
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Homie Rollerz	N/A	Destineer	226	E
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Insecticide	6.5	Gamecock	226	E10+
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	3.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 3	5.5	Konami	227	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
MLB 2K8 Fantasy All-Stars	6.5	2K Sports	228	E
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Myst	5.0	Empire Interactive	227	E
Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Sega	226	E
N+	7.0	Atari	228	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy/D3PA	217	E10+
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	226	T
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	8.5	Tecmo	227	T
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Petz: Bunnyz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puchi Puchi Virus	7.0	NIS America	228	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
Rondo of Swords	6.5	Atlus	228	E10+
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	7.0	Ignition	228	E10+
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
The World Ends with You	9.0	Square Enix	228	T
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
Zoo Tycoon 2 DS	7.0	THQ	226	E

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 & 3 RETURN

I was raring to play another light-gun shooter right after finishing Sega's Ghost Squad, so it's great that The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return came out when it did. While these two classic arcade games may show their age (especially House of the Dead 2), they're both still a lot of fun. I'd like to see more light-gun games on store shelves; right now I've got my eye on Konami's Target: Terror, and I'm still hoping that Sega makes a Virtua Cop for Wii. —JUSTIN C.

OKAMI

> *Though the new control scheme can be annoying at times, Okami is so fantastic that it hardly detracts from the fun. If you own a Wii, you must play this game.*
>
> —TOM H.

NINJA GAIDEN: DRAGON SWORD

This is a must-have title for action fans. While the levels are a bit bland– usually just wide open spaces for fighting–the demon slaying is satisfying, the stylus-only control works surprisingly well, and the production values are top-notch. I do, however, feel that combat gets a little too repetitive, but its short overall length (around five hours) and easy-to-pick-up bite-sized bits of gameplay keep Dragon Sword from dulling its edge. —CHRIS SL.

EVENTS

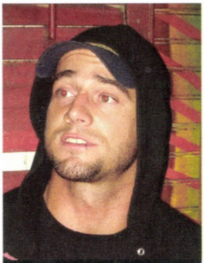
Gaming Grapplers

The WWE superstars are already larger than life, but who would they be if they leapt into their favorite video games?

Every spring prior to WrestleMania (World Wrestling Entertainment's biggest event of the year), the superstars of WWE duke it out for the title of best gamer. At this year's THQ Superstar Challenge—held at the House of Blues in Orlando, Florida—16 WWE wrestlers and divas battled for the win, with the prize ultimately going to ECW star Elijah Burke (who also won the tournament last year). Amidst the competition, some of the superstars took the time to discuss their gaming habits with Nintendo Power. The question at hand: if you could be a character in any video game, what game or character would you pick, and why? —CHRIS H.

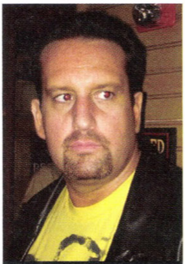
MATT HARDY: "I would be the dude with the claw from Street Fighter II, Vega. I was a big fan of Vega back in the day, just because he was so cool and he did flips and stuff like that."

REY MYSTERIO: "I would probably be the character from Pirates of the Caribbean, Jack Sparrow. I like the way he acts, I like his movies, and definitely him biting the whole gimmick off of Keith Richards, so yeah."

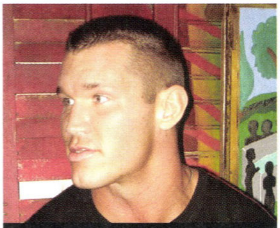


CM PUNK: "Pro Wrestling for the Nintendo [Entertainment System] has a lot of great characters: King Slender, Amazon, Star Man. Kin Korn Karn—he's a favorite of mine. If I was in that, I'd have to have a wacky name. I'd also like to maybe be in Double Dragon, because I once spent $25 to beat that in the arcades, and I would like my money back."

MVP, WWE UNITED STATES CHAMPION: "One of the first characters that comes to mind is Eddie Gordo from Tekken. He was one of my favorites. When I was on the indies, my finisher was a variation of one of his spinning kicks. I called it Malicious Intent. It's like that capoeira fighting style. [Or] I'd have to be the guy from the Grand Theft Auto series. Because who wouldn't want to be that guy? I mean, you just do whatever you want to do, and no matter what happens, even if you die, you just press reset and start all over. And I'm all old-school here, so forgive me, but 'Get over here!' [I'd be] Scorpion from Mortal Kombat."



TOMMY DREAMER: "Lara Croft, because I could do amazing things, and she's really, really hot. And I could look at myself naked in the mirror."

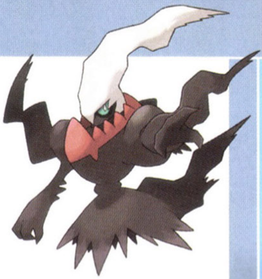


RANDY ORTON, WWE CHAMPION: "God of War, I'd say. He's just a badass dude. I don't know how else to explain it. I like that medieval, kick-ass, whatever he's throwin' around. It's been a while since I've played. Just, that guy is pretty cool. That's what it boils down to. He's a badass. Who wouldn't want to be him?"

MATT HARDY PHOTO: "© 2008 World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved."

EVENTS

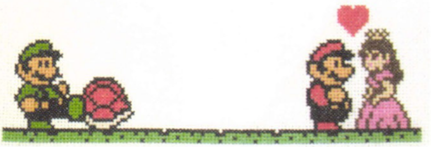
Darkrai is Coming



To help celebrate the May 27th DVD release of *Pokémon: The Rise of Darkrai*, Toys "R" Us is hosting a special event for Pokémon fans. On Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1, between noon and 4pm, all Toys "R" Us stores in the United States will distribute the Pokémon Darkrai, the mysterious new Dark-type Pokémon appearing in the movie, to anyone who brings in his or her DS along with a Pokémon Diamond or Pokémon Pearl Game Card. (In order to add Darkrai to your copy of Pokémon Diamond or Pearl, make sure you've obtained the Pokédex in your game.) On top of that, all DS games will be $5 off and the following GBA Pokémon titles will be 40% off: Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team, Pokémon Sapphire, and Pokémon Emerald. —TOM H.

Pokémon
The Rise of
Darkrai
Somewhere Between Time & Space...
A Legend is Born.

Darkrai is a powerful and mysterious new Pokémon that could be friend or foe. All we'll tell you is that Ash and his friends face Darkrai in an epic battle with Dialga and Palkia!



FANDOM

Mario and Stitch

John Lohman of www.spritestitch.com, the popular game-themed cross-stitching website, is male and proud of it. "I grew up doing crafty activities as a child and this was really just a natural progression for me," he says. "Cross-stitch has traditionally been a girls' hobby because the content of the stitching patterns has traditionally been female. I'm setting out to change that by providing patterns—and content—that can be appreciated by both males and females."

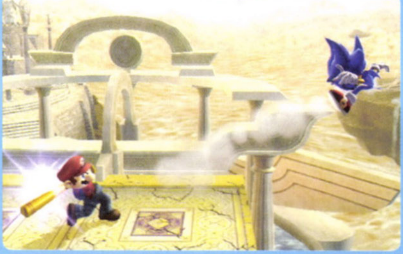
So far, he's doing a great job of it. Lohman's site acts as a showcase for cross-stitchers around the world, and as one of the only sources for quality downloadable gaming-related patterns. And while there's a surprising amount of variety among the content, the site's Nintendo-sprite domination is obvious. "I was a child of the '80s and I grew up playing games like Super Mario Bros. and Contra at friends' houses on the original NES," he explains. "My childhood video game nostalgia is directly tied into Nintendo, and so my crafts reflect that." His favorite personal cross-stitch and pattern—"Bitter Luigi" and "Mario across the NES Ages," respectively—tell us he's not lying. —KAISER H.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

We had a doozy of a screenshot in V. 227. Who knew My Horse and Me was so...creepy? We have an absolutely *smashing* screenshot this month. OK, that was a pretty bad pun, but email your best captions to screentest@futureus.com anyway.

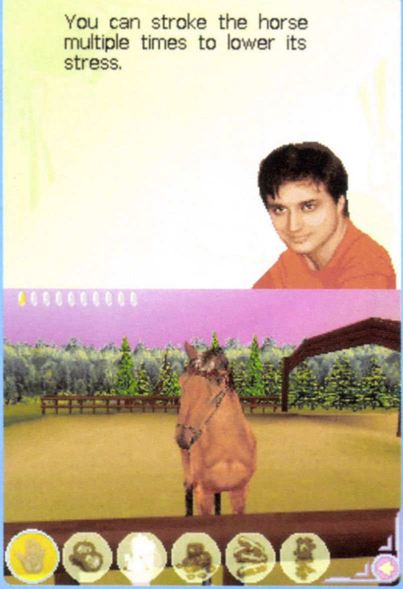
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



"Now that's-a what I call blast processing!"

HERE'S OUR CAPTION.
Think you can do better?

VOLUME 227'S SHOT

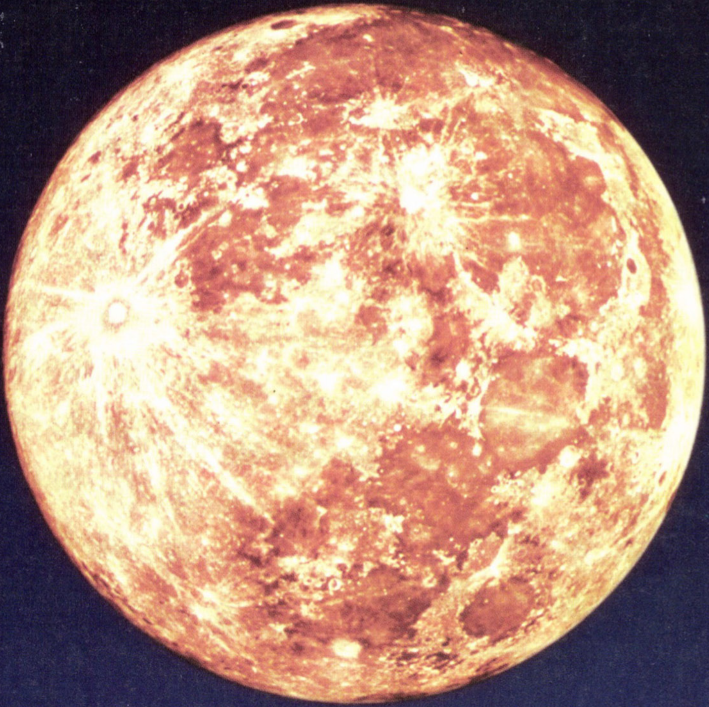


You can stroke the horse multiple times to lower its stress.

"Next week on an all-new *How to Catch a Horse Predator....*" —MATT S.

"When Stallion saw his new trainer, he knew right away that he was in for one bad week." —MATTFOX

"The horse was tramautized when Daniel Radcliffe wanted to stroke and model with it." —TYLER B.



JULY 2008 • VOL. 230

NEXT MONTH

As we head into summer, expect things to heat up in the pages of Nintendo Power. July's issue will include big updates on Ghostbusters, Sonic Chronicles, and Time Hollow. We may even have a surprise or two. Can you find the clues we've hidden in the moon? See you in 30!

Nintendo Power (ISSN 1041-9551) is published 13 times a year (monthly, except semi-monthly in September) by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at South San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. Ride-Along: None. Standard Mail Enclosure: None. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: $24.95; Canada $29.95. Canadian orders must be prepaid in US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R128220688). Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement #40043631. Returns: 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. For customer service write to: Nintendo Power Customer Care, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270, or call: 1(866) 941-8368 in the US. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Nintendo Power, P.O. Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Entire contents copyright 2008, Future US, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. Produced and printed in the United States.

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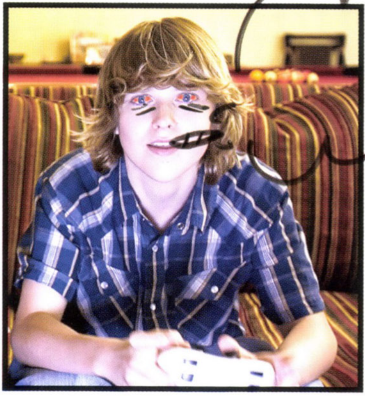
READER REVIEW


you.

GAMER OF THE WEEK

Name: Ted Krinshaw
Age: 15
Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida

PROS: InverteBOTS rocks! I recommend being the king scorpion. You get killer claws and one wicked stinger. Definitely the best attack combos.

CONS: The match-ups can get kinda unrealistic. I don't care who you are, an amped-up ant could never take a teched-out tarantula. Game over.

Tom

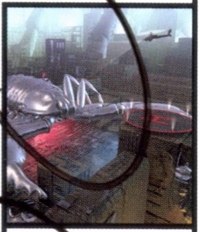
INVERTEBOTS

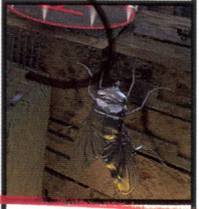
So there you sit on your couch, watching your favorite team on TV. You hear a thump, but you're too lazy to crank your head to the window to see. Your dog begins barking. You feel a thump in the ground. Your dog stops barking. Actually where is your dog? Then suddenly a stinger the size of a telephone pole comes crashing though your roof, directly into your mom's best china. You look outside to see a 60-foot robotic scorpion laying waste to your neighborhood. And all you can say is "Sweet."

Enter the InverteBOTS, the newest creation from POWERSOURCE 360. A re-evolution of Rampage, InverteBOTS's premise is simple. If you can grasp it, you can smash it. Set in the not-too-distant future, the world's machines have become modeled after the most resilient organisms on Earth: bugs. Techno-exoskeleton superbugs with the meanest of mechanical mandibles make mayhem on mankind. And you're behind the wheel. Antennas. Apart from your pesky opponent sitting next to you, you'll have to fend off ranks of army ants, maniacal mayflies, and one bad mother sucker, the Mosquito.

It has multi-function modes of play, from one- and two-player missions to a free-for-all bug-bashing to a head-to-head torso-twisting roughhouse.

Lifelike graphics blend with just enough computer animation to let you level a city block without feeling too bad. And with independent controlling options that allow you to move each arm and leg individually, it's not all that hard, either.


King Scorpion


Super Fly

Check you out at the party last night. Not the friend I went with. We need to talk. -AJ

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JUNE 2008

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Alcohol Reference
Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes

http://na.square-enix.com/ffta2/

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